

SERMONS

ON

Several Subjects.

V I Z.

Of Pride, Luxury, Idleness, Unmercifulness.

Of Uncleanness.

Of future Punishments and Rewards.

Of Education.

Of the Knowledge of God.

Of the Service of God, and of Sincerity and Cheerfulness therein.

Of God's Omniscieny.

Of seeking God.

Of Apostacy, and of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

The Fifth Volume.

By JOHN CONANT, D. D.

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L O N D O N,

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**THE
PUBLISHER
TO THE
READER.**

THOSE that had the Care
of Dr. Conant's Sermons
committed to them, being solli-
cited to Publish another Sett of
them, have had more of them
reviewed and prepared for the
Press; of which Number the
present Volume (being the *Fifth*)
doth consist.

I think

To the Reader.

I think I may now undertake,
that with the next Volume there
will be also published an Account
of the Doctor's LIFE by an
able Hand.

John Chichester.

August 26.

1707.

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I Chron. xxviii. 9. *And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.* Pag. 217, 254, 293, 335, 365, 401, 439, 477, 519.

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SERMON I.

Ezek. xvi. Ver. 49, 50.

Behold, This was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom; Pride, Fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness was in her, and in her Daughters; neither did she strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy: And they were haughty, and committed Abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

IN this Chapter the Prophet sets forth to the Life, the monstrous Sins of Jerusalem, and the fearful Judgments of God due to her for those Sins. The Heinousness of her Sins he sets forth, as several other ways, so by comparing
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her with *Sodom* and *Samaria*; and shewing that *Jerusalem* exceeded both the one and the other in Wickedness, and justified them both, *ver. 51.* that is, though the Sins of *Sodom* and *Samaria* were exceeding great, yet so much worse was *Jerusalem* than either of them, that in comparison with her, they might seem to be in a manner innocent. And as to *Sodom* in particular, in the 48th Verse, God pronounceth with a solemn Oath, that *Jerusalem* was more vile and sinful than she had been. *As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy Sister hath not done, she and her Daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy Daughters.* Then in the Words of my Text, we have an Account of the Sins of *Sodom*, together with the Punishment inflicted on her for them.

1. We have an Account of her Sins: *Behold, this was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom; Pride, Fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness was in her and in her Daughters: neither did they strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy; and they were haughty, and committed Abomination before me.*

2. We have an Account of her Punishment in those last Words, *Therefore I took them away as I saw good.* By
Sodom

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Sodom in this place, some very learned Men understand the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*, or that Country where they lived, which did border upon that Place where *Sodom* and her *Daughters*, those other lesser Cities under her Dominion, formerly stood. And that Country say they might well be called *Sodom*, as in regard of its Nearness and Vicinity to *Sodom*, so in regard the Inhabitants thereof were descended from *Lot*, who was an Inhabitant of *Sodom*. To which also this may be added, that the Name of *Sodom* might be fitly given them, because in their abominable Sins, they resembled *Sodom*: as *Sodom* in the Text is called *Jerusalem's* Sister, because no Sisters could be more like one another than *Jerusalem* and *Sodom* were in their abominable Sins; only *Jerusalem* was the worse of the two. Worse she was, 'tis probable, in respect of some Sins found in her which were not found, or at least, did not so reign in *Sodom* it self: But to be sure the Sins of *Jerusalem* were in this respect, incomparably greater than those of *Sodom*; because *Sodom* never had the Means of Grace which *Jerusalem* enjoyed. Now these Authors would therefore rather by *Sodom* understand the *Moabites* and *Ammonites*; because old *Sodom* was destroyed

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in *Abram's* time, above a thousand Years before *Ezekiel's* Propheſie, or before *Ezekiel* was born: as likewise becauſe they think this Interpretation would better ſuit with ſome other Paſſages of this Chapter afterwards, which I cannot at preſent ſpend Time to mention, much leſs to examine. The Opinion that hath been more commonly received is, that *Sodom* is here to be taken properly for old *Sodom*, though ſo long ſince brought to nought: and that the Prophet, as it were, rakes her out of the Duſt, and compares *Jeruſalem* with her, as the fitteſt Inſtance of Compariſon that could be found to repreſent the loathſome Filthineſs, and horrid Provocations thereof. And ſeeing there is nothing in the Words which I have read, but may very well agree to old *Sodom*, I ſhall not look out for any other Senſe. The Text, you ſee, contains many Particulars; and I muſt run over the moſt of them very briefly, that I may come to that towards the Cloſe of the Words which I chiefly intended. To ſpeak a little therefore of the Sins of *Sodom*, in order as they lie. The firſt of them is *Pride*, which may well challenge the firſt Place, as 'tis wont to do. For,

I. *Pride*

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1. Pride is a Mother-Sin, the Parent and the Nurse of many other Sins. From Pride comes Stubbornness, Disobedience, Rebellion against our Superiours, Undervaluing and Contempt of Equals and Inferiors. From Pride comes our Unteachableness, Untractableness, Obstinacy. From our Pride comes our Discontent with our Condition, our Unthankfulness, Murmuring, and Repining. From Pride comes our Domineering and Insulting over others; our reproachful, contumelious and injurious Carriage towards them. From Pride comes all our Maligning and Envyng, our inward Disquiet and Regret at the good Things of others. From Pride come Rents and Divisions in Churches, Heats and Animosities in Corporations, Jarrings and Contentions in Families, Distances and Heart-burnings between private Christians, and, What not? Pride is a Captain, a leading Sin, that is evermore attended with a Troop of other Sins at the Heels of it.

2. 'Tis a most dangerous and pernicious Sin; a Sin that threatens the Ruine of him in whom it prevails. *Pride goeth before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall*, Prov. 16. 18. Pride

cast the fallen Angels out of Heaven, and *Adam* out of Paradise.

3. Pride is a most odious Sin. It makes us odious to Men, even to the worst of Men: The Proud Man himself cannot endure Pride in another. It makes us odious to God. *He knoweth the Proud afar off*, Psal. 138. 6. which, as some conceive, is spoken after the manner of Men, who keep a loof off from those whom they cannot endure. He opposeth himself against the Proud above all other: *He resisteth the Proud*, Jam. 4. 6. When the Lord would humble *Job*, and make him more sensible of the infinite Distance that was between him and his Maker, he asketh him, *Whether he had an Arm like God*, Job 40. 9, 10, 11, 12. that is, Whether he had Power to match God, and to effect those great Things which God did? If he had such a Conceit of himself, he bids him shew his Power, in imitating the great Works of God. *Deck thy self now with Majesty and Excellency*, saith he, *and array thy self with Glory and Beauty: Cast abroad the Rage of thy Wrath, and behold every one that is Proud, and abase him: Look on every one that is Proud, and bring him low.* As if he had said, These
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are my great Works; 'tis my Property, and the continual Course of my Providence, thus to do; and therefore, if thou wilt compare thy self with me, thou must do the like. So then the proud Man is so odious unto God, that 'tis God's Property to espy him out wherever he be, and to abase him. The Uses hereof may be divers.

Use I. This may inform us concerning the Reason of that Method which God useth in the Conversion of Sinners; and why still his first Work is to convince them of their sinful and miserable Estate, and to humble them. Pride being the Mother and Nurse of so many other Sins, when God will change a Man, and make him a new Creature, he begins with his Pride, and first pulls down that, because 'tis impossible any Good should be done upon a Man, until his proud Spirit be taken down. But when a Man's Pride hath once received its deadly Wound, it may then be hoped, that those other Sins, which are the Daughters and Attendants of Pride, will also by degrees be weakned, and at length subdued.

Use II. It also informs us of the Reason of God's Dealings with his People,

in carrying on the Work of Grace after Conversion. We shall observe that there is no Sin in God's Children, the keeping under and subduing whereof God, in the Course of his wise and gracious Providence, more aims at than of Pride. When this at any time begins to gather Strength again, and put up the Head, the constant Discipline of God is immediately to check it by the Application of some effectual Remedy or other. In most of those Afflictions which God is pleased to lay on his, What doth he aim at but the pulling down of their Pride, and the humbling of them more thoroughly? As this Sin is most odious to God, which makes him strike at it so often; so he knows full well how dangerous and mischievous 'tis to us; and therefore he useth so many Means to keep it under.

Use III. It should perswade us to set our selves against this Sin above all other Sins, and to be constantly endeavouring the Mortification thereof. To this End let us,

1. Observe it in its first Risings, and all its several Workings, and oppose it.

2. Let

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2. Let us carefully avoid all those Things that feed our Pride, and minister Fuel to the Fire. Let us resolve to deny our selves even lawful Things, where we see our Pride is apt to abuse them, and to cherish her self with them; and much more let us be careful to cast off all such Incentives to Pride, as are also otherwise unlawful in themselves.

Use IV. Let us be willing to be under God's Method for subduing our Pride. Let us not think we are hardly dealt with, though for the Killing of so dangerous and mischievous a Corruption, he see good to keep us still under his severe Discipline, and follow us from Time to Time with one Affliction after another.

Use V. Let Parents, and such as have the Education of the younger sort, think it one great Part of their Work, to break and keep down this Corruption. They do nothing on Children to any purpose, unless they pull down their natural Pride. Without this, all their other Endeavours will be fruitless and successless. What may we then think of all those Parents, who rather cherish and encourage the natural Pride of their Children, than endeavour to curb it; who encrease it, and heighten it, who feed

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feed and humour it, either by adorning them with such Apparel as is far above their Quality and Condition, or by teaching them to take up and follow every foolish and fantastical Dress, which Pride and Vanity shall find out and invent. Let all sober Christians be at the greatest Distance from these fantastical Vanities; and let them so attire themselves and theirs, as they may be Examples of Modesty and Sobriety, to all that behold them.

Use VI. Let not Children think it their Unhappiness, if they be under the Government of those Parents who are careful to use all good Means to curb their Pride betimes, and who will not suffer them to be as vain and fantastical as others are. Let them not murmur at the Severity of that Discipline under which they are kept: Let them acknowledge it as no small Mercy, that God is thus pleased to use Means for killing their Pride in Season. How happy had it been for many, if they had been inur'd to bear the Yoke in their Youth; if their Pride had been crusht when it first began to put forth it self; if from their tender Years, they had been trained up to Humility, Modesty, and

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and Sobriety ; How many sore Blows and sharp Afflictions befalling them in After-times, might this have prevented ? Children and younger People, are apt to think it their only Happiness to have their Wills, and to be suffered to be as proud and vain as they please ; but Time may come, when they will count it their great Unhappiness, to have been under no more Restraint in their younger Years. They may smart for it as long as they live, as many others have done.

The second Sin of *Sodom* is, *Fulness of Bread* : By which we are not to understand Plenty of Meat and Drink, and all other Provisions for Livelihood, all which are comprehended under Bread ; for Plenty is God's Bounty, and not Man's Sin : But by Fulness of Bread we are to understand the sinful Abuse of Plenty to Intemperance, Excess and Riot. *Sodom* was a very fruitful Place ; the Country adjoining, is said to have been as the *Garden of the Lord*, *Gen. 13. 10.* But usually, so 'tis where God is most bountiful, there Men are most apt to abuse his Bounty to Wantonness and Excess. Thus it was with *Sodom*, the Fruit of their Plenty was Riot and Intemperance. 'Tis a sad Effect of God's Good-

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Goodness towards us, when it makes us worse, and when we take his Mercies, and make them the Instruments of our Sin, and Fewel for our Lusts. The Prone-ness of our Nature to abuse his Bounty, may teach us several Lessons.

1. It may teach those who have much of this World, to be so much the more watchful over themselves, lest their Plenty beget carnal Security and Luxury.

2. It should moderate our Desires after earthly Things, and make such as have but little of the World, to be so much the better contented with that small Portion which God hath thought fit to allot them. The less they have, the less is their Danger, and the fewer are their Temptations.

3. It may also teach Men not to be over solicitous about their Children and Posterity, because they are able to leave them but little. If they can obtain Grace for them, a little, with the Fear of the Lord, will serve their turns, and make their Condition much more comfortable than that of many who have Abundance, and whose Cup over flows: And if they could leave them much more, perhaps it would be so much the worse for them. As it would certainly
increase

increase their Trouble, and incumber them the more; so without great Watchfulness, it might increase their Sin, and hinder them in their Way to Heaven.

Now as for the Sin in the Text, *Fulness of Bread*, or an intemperate and luxurious Abuse of those good Things which God bestows upon us, to encourage us to serve him more cheerfully; 'tis that, which upon divers weighty Considerations, we should be very careful to decline.

1. 'Tis horrid Unthankfulness to God, the Author and free Bestower of all our Comforts; to make his Bounty serviceable to our Sin. What is it but to fight against him with his own Mercies?

2. 'Tis a consuming of God's good Creatures, wastfully and wickedly.

3. 'Tis a rendring our selves unfit for the Service of God, and the Duties of our Callings, by those good Things which were given us, to be used by us with that Temperance and Sobriety as we might thereby be fitter and abler for the Discharge of all Duties required of us.

4. 'Tis a Degree of Self-Murder, while by our Excesses we treasure up Matter of Diseases, and shorten our Lives.

5. The

5. The Pampering and Surcharging of our Bodies by Excess, is as great a Prejudice to the Health of our Souls, as to the Health of our Bodies. Intemperance feeds, and heightens, and inflames unruly Passions and inordinate Lusts: for an intemperate Body makes an intemperate Soul.

6. It is an Injury to the Poor and Needy, which might be relieved out of those Superfluities with which we glut our selves. And though Excess in Drinking be more infamous, and hath a worse Name, because it deprives a Man of the Use of his Reason, and makes him for the Time, little better than a Beast; yet may Intemperance in Eating be sometimes as bad, and in regard of some Circumstances, much worse. Both of them are heinous Sins, and for the most part, carry their own Punishment along with them in those Distempers they bring upon Soul and Body, besides the sorer Punishments that await the Sinner in another World. Let it be our Care to make such a sober, temperate, and thankful Use of all God's Mercies, as it may neither repent him to have bestowed them on us, nor us to have received them, when we shall hereafter smart for the Abuse of them.

I pass

I pass on to the third Sin, *Abundance of Idleness*. And this also as Pride, is both a great Sin in it self considered, and the Mother of many other Sins. The idle Person is a *disorderly Person*, 2 *Thes.* 3. 6. He is one that breaks that Order which God hath set Men. 'Tis his Appointment and Ordinance, that every Man should have a Calling, some honest and lawful Employment wherein to exercise himself. He allows no Man to live idly. Adam in the State of Innocency, had his Employment assigned him: God put him into the Garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it, Gen. 2. 15. And as for such as will not work, God will not have them to be relieved, *they must not eat*, 2 *Thes.* 3. 10. Yea, their Company must be avoided, and Christians must have no familiar Converse with them, but withdraw themselves from them, 2 *Thes.* 3. 14. Neither may we wonder at it, that God would have this Sin to be so odious to us, if we consider the many Mischiefs that attend it.

1. The idle Person is a useless Person; he is a Burthen to the Common-wealth, and to the Place where he lives. His Idleness is maintain'd by the Labour of other

other Mens Hands; others must work, that he may sit still.

2. The idle Person is usually a pernicious Instrument of much Mischief to others that are about him. Who are they who make it their Business to debauch others, and entice them to all manner of Lewdness, but they who will have nothing else to do, who will set themselves about no honest Employment, to take up their Time? These are the Pests, the very Plagues of the Places where they are. These are they that multiply Provocations, and *increase the Transgressors among Men*, as Solomon saith of the lewd Woman, *Prov. 23. 28.* These are they who make haste to fill up the Measure of our Sins, to draw down the Judgments of God upon us.

3. Idleness is the Cause of many other heinous Sins.

1st, From Idleness comes Pride; they go together in the Text, and they are seldom sever'd either in Rich or Poor. Who more proud and stout than many of those poor People whose Hands refuse to labour, and will not be brought to endeavour to get their Living by any honest Employment? But now Labour and Pains-taking humbles us, and 'tis
not

not the least Benefit thereof that it doth
do, considering the Pride of our Nature,
and how fast this Weed grows up in
us, unless there be something to keep it
down.

2dly, From Idleness comes Filthiness
and Uncleaness. When *David* had no-
thing to do, or for the present, would
have nothing to do, though his Armies
were at present in the Field, then was
he drawn into that great Sin with *Bath-
sheba*, which afterwards he paid so dear-
ly for, 2 *Sam.* 11. 1, 2. And here in
the Text, the Abundance of Idleness that
was in *Sodom*, made way for that abo-
minable Filthiness among them which
drew down the Judgment of God upon
that Place.

3dly, From Idleness comes Purloining,
Filching, and Stealing. They who will
not endeavour to supply their Wants by
Labour and Industry in some honest Cal-
ling, will be tempted to get Supplies by
unlawful Means. Who are so much gi-
ven to Cheating and Couzening, to
Thieving and Robberies, as those idle
Persons who cannot endure to be in any
Calling, or to settle to any good Employ-
ment? And what's the Issue of this idle
and disorderly Course of Life at last, but
that

that many of them, through the most righteous Judgment of God, come to an untimely End and shameful Death, by the Hand of Justice?

4^{thly}, Idleness is the Mother of Tatling and Tale-bearing, of Slanders and Backbitings. Idle Persons have no other Work to do, but to carry Tales and Slanders from House to House, thereby to sow Seeds of Variance and Contention between Neighbours and Friends. Idleness is a Make-bate wherever it is.

5^{thly}, From Idleness comes sinful Curiosity, a corrupt Humour of Prying into other Mens Affairs, and of meddling with other Mens Matters. The idle Person is mostly a *Busie-body*, 2 Thes. 3. 11. 1 Tim. 5. 13. And well he may for he that hath no Work of his own is well at leisure to intrude himself into other Mens Affairs in which he is not concerned, and which he hath no Call to meddle with. Thus we have seen some of the Mischiefs and sad Consequents of Idleness. I now come to make some brief Application of what hath been spoken concerning it.

Use 1. This should teach us all to shun this Sin, as we would the mischievous Effects and Punishment thereof.

And

And this doth not only concern the poorer sort, and such as cannot well subsist without an Employment to get their Bread by, but the Rich also, and those who have enough to maintain them in Idleness. For,

1. God's Ordinance reacheth these as well as others; and they are to be looked on as disorderly Walkers, if they live idly. Whatever the richer Sort may think, they can no more justify themselves before God in an idle Course of Life, than the Poor can.

2. They hereby expose themselves to many Temptations. They who will have no honest Employment, invite Satan to set them a-work. And they invite Satan's Instruments, lewd and ungodly Persons, to seduce them, and draw them aside into the Ways of Sin. Having nothing to do, they are always in a Readiness to be at their Beck and Call: Whereas an honest Employment would hold them in, and fix them so as every Temptation would not carry them away. 'Tis certainly one Cause, and not the least, of the Debauchery and Lewdness of too many of those of better Quality in the Nation, that having Estates of their own to live on, they give them-

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selves to Idleness; and that their Idleness lays them open to all manner of Temptations.

3. The idle Person that refuseth to be in any Way of honest Employment, puts himself out from under God's Protection. For God hath no longer promised us his Protection, than while we keep in his Way. But if we will walk in By-ways and irregular Paths of our own choosng, we must do it at our Peril, and look to our selves as well as we can; not presuming that we shall be any longer under the special Care and Protection of his wise and gracious Providence, than we are willing to walk in his Ways, and live under his Government. *He keepeth the Paths of Judgment, and preserveth the Way of his Saints, Prov. 2. 8. But as for such as turn aside to their own crooked Ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the Workers of Iniquity, Psal. 125. 5.*

Use 2. Let those who are in a low Condition, engaging and necessitating them to work and take pains, not repine at their Condition, but be well contented therewith, and be thankful to God that he makes use of any thing to make them industrious, and keep them from

from Idleness. You little consider how much Mischief the Providence of God keeps you from, while it keeps you from Idleness.

Use 3. Let People be thankful for Employment, and readily embrace it when offered them; and let them count it a great Mercy that God provides Work for them.

Use 4. Let such with all Thankfulness acknowledge God's Goodness to them, that he makes them industrious, and that he hath so framed their Disposition, that they hate Idleness, and cannot enjoy themselves longer than they are in some good Way of Employment. If you think this no great Matter to be acknowledged with so much Thankfulness, consider how many are of that wretched Disposition, of that slothful and lazy Temper, as that 'tis as Death to them to be kept to any Employment; and how much Mischief attends such a lazy, listless, and sleepy Temper.

Use 5. Let all Parents bring up their Children to Industry, and inure them to it from their tender Years. If thro' Neglect of them they suffer them to get an Habit of Idleness, oh how much Sin and Misery do they thereby betray

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them to ! How great therefore is their Sin who bring up their Children to nothing else but Pride and Idleness !

Use 6. Let Children not think hardly of the Discipline of Parents who keep them close to their Work, and cannot endure to see them idle. Though it may be irksome to them for the present, yet they little know how much they are behold- ing to them for that severer Education.

Use 7. Let all in their Places encourage Industry in whomsoever they observe it. And this may be done several Ways.

1. By imploying Industrious Persons above others, finding out Work for them, and sometimes making Employment for them to set them a-work even where you have no great Need of their Service.

2. By using them well when you do employ them, and giving them with the most rather than the least for their Labour.

3. By relieving them above others, in a hard Season, when Things are dear, or when they want Work, or where their Charge is great, or when they are visited with Sicknes, or when by Means of Old Age coming on, their Strength be-
gins

gins to fail, and they can do little towards their Livelihood.

4. By not casting them off, and refusing to imploy them, because their Strength decaying, they cannot do as they have done; but still making use of them, and paying them well, though with some small Prejudice to your self. These are some of those Ways in which private Persons that are of Ability, may and should encourage Industry. And as for publick Persons, the Magistrate, and such as have any Interest in the Disposal of what is intended for the Succour and Relief of the poorer sort, they may encourage Industry,

1st, By providing carefully for those that are, or that while able to work, have been industrious, and looking after the Supply of their Wants in a special manner, and supplying them out of what is in their Disposal, more liberally than such as have been idle, though at present also in want.

2^{dly}, And by putting them, rather than others, into those Places which the Charity of Benefactors hath founded for the Succour of the Aged, Enfeebled, and Impotent Poor. 'Tis true, those that have been idle, when they come to be

be in Want and cannot help themselves, must not perish; but there is no Reason that they should be relieved as plentifully as those who have been diligent and laborious. 'Tis fit there should be a Difference in the Distribution of Charity, and that if some must smart, they should who would never take any Pains to get a Livelihood, even when they were best able to undergo Labour, but chose rather to eat the Bread of Idleness, and live upon the Spoil.

Use 8. Idleness being so pernicious and dangerous a Sin, this calls upon such as are in Authority, and are intrusted with Power, to provide, as far as they are able, that the Poor may be engaged in and kept to some honest Employment, to the end they may eat their own Bread, and not be exposed to those Temptations that Idleness lays them open unto. 'Tis the great Reproach of this Place, that so many Children are brought up to Beggery, and are permitted to make it their Practice; there being no effectual Means used for restraining them, and enforcing them to be doing something or other, according to their Age and Capacity, whereby they may get somewhat, though but little, towards their Subsistence.

sistance. The Town is greatly burdened with Poor already, and if there should be no better Course taken to prevent it, the Number of Poor would increase continually, and in a short time, this Place would be overrun with them. I beseech those that have the Government of this Town to think of some effectual Expedient for Redressing this sad Evil. What have you Power for? And why are you intrusted with it, but to make use of it in such a Case as this? It cannot easily be conceived how much Mischief redounds to Places where these Things are suffered.

1. There is a Curse of God upon this disorderly Course of Life.

2. Persons inured to the Trade of Begging, for the most part, live in Ignorance and Prophaneness, seldom or never attending on publick Ordinances, whereby they might be acquainted with God and their Duty.

Lastly, These are they who, by their ungodly and vicious Conversation, hasten the pulling down of the heavy Judgments of God upon the Places where they live.

I come now to the 4th Sin of Sodom; *Neither did she strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy*: That is, they were hard-

hard-hearted and unmerciful to the Poor living among them, and did not relieve them as their Necessities required.

Here, 1. we may observe, that though *Sodom* was a very fruitful and wealthy Place, and abounded with all manner of Provisions for Life, yet amidst so great Plenty, there were those among them who were in Want. There is no Place so rich and so plentifully furnished with the Things of this Life, where there are not some to be found whose Condition is low and strait. *Judea* was a rich and plentiful Country, a Land flowing with Milk and Honey, and yet the *Israelites* who possessed it, were not all rich: Else God needed not to have given them so many Laws, by which Provision was made for the Poor. Notwithstanding the extraordinary Fertility of that Land, and God's singular Blessing upon it, in which Respect *Moses* said, *That the Eyes of the Lord were always upon it, from the Beginning of the Year to the End of the Year*, Deut. 11. 12. Yet God told them, *That the Poor should never cease out of the Land*, Deut. 15. 11.

In all Places, some by their Idleness, Wastfulness, and other Sins, bring themselves to Poverty; And others are impoverished

verified by the Cruelty and Oppression of the Rich.

But this is not the only Cause of that Difference which is between Men in respect of the Things of this World. The most wise Providence of God so orders Things, that some shall have much of these earthly Things, and others little; that some should have Abundance, and others be in Want; and this to several Purposes.

1st, That there might never want Objects to exercise the Charity of the Rich. If there were no Poor, the Rich would want the Comfort and Reward of being helpful to others, and of relieving their Necessities out of that Abundance with which God hath blessed them.

2^{dly}, That his free Bounty to the Rich might the better appear, and they be thereby provoked to the greater Thankfulness. The Providence of God in giving so much to some, and so little to others, is that which should much affect the richer Sort, and cause in them an holy Admiration of God's free Bounty to themselves above others. Your Table is richly, or plentifully spread, and your Cup overflows, while many others, as good as your self by Nature, and possibly

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sibly, in respect of Grace, much better, have not a Piece of Bread but what is gotten by hard Labour, or for which they are beholding to the Charity of others. Now who maketh you to differ from another? And what have you that you have not received from his Hand, who distributeth to every Man severally as he pleaseth? Who might so have disposed of Things as you might have received Alms from the Hands of those to whom you give it, and as you might have needed those very Reliefs your self which now you reach forth to others. What Thankfulness do you owe to God, who hath made such a Difference between you and them!

3^{dly}, God's most wise Providence dispenseth the Things of this Life so differently, a great deal to some, and very little to others, that there might be some who would be willing to undergo those mean and low, those laborious and toilsome Services which are so necessary, as that without them neither Poor nor Rich could subsist. If all were rich, or noble, and honourable, Who should plow and dig, and thresh, and grind at the Mill? Who should undergo an hundred meaner, but necessary Employments?

4^{thly},

4thly, God hath put this Difference between Men, for the better maintaining and preserving of Humane Society, and to unite Mankind, and tye Men one to another in a firmer Bond. As the Apostle saith concerning the natural Body, that *God hath so set the Members thereof, as the Eye cannot say unto the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you*: So 'tis in the Body politick, God hath so framed and set the Members thereof, as they might all have a mutual Dependance upon one another, and such mutual Helps and Assistances from one another, as the one might not be able to be without the other; as the Rich might not live without the Service and Ministrations of the Poor, *The King himself being served by the Field*, as Solomon speaks, *Eccles. 5. 9.* and the Poor might not subsist, but by the Employment and Relief which they should have from the Rich: as neither the Poor might be able to say, they have no need of the Rich, neither the Rich, that they have no need of the Poor. And hence may all learn their Duty; the Rich neither to insult over, oppress, contem or despise the Poor; nor the Poor to envy the Rich,

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Rich, or murmur against the Providence of God, but to rest contented with that meaner Station and Condition which the most wise and supream Lord of Heaven and Earth hath assigned them. And so much of that first Thing.

2. We may hence observe, That 'tis a great Sin not to *strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy*, according to the Abilities and Opportunities which God affordeth. It were sufficient to prove the Greatness of this Sin, that 'tis here recorded among those Sins of *Sodom* that procured the Destruction thereof. And yet, if this be not enough to shew the Greatness of it, we may take notice, that 'tis the Sin which Christ will single out and instance in, at the Day of Judgment, for which the Sentence of eternal Condemnation shall then pass upon the Wicked, *Mat. 25. 41, 42, 43. Then shall Christ say to them on the Left hand, Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in; I was naked, and ye clothed me not.* To the same purpose is that terrible Passage of *St. James, Chap. 2.*

13. *He shall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no Mercy.*

Now this Sin is sometimes very much aggravated by the Circumstances thereof. Two Circumstances we have in the Text, by which the Unmercifulness of the *Sodomites* was aggravated.

1. The great Plenty and Abundance wherewith the Rich were furnished.

2. Their luxurious and riotous Abuse of their Plenty. That they who had so much to spare, and did so wickedly mispend and lavish away what they abounded with, in Ways of Pride and Luxury, should in the mean time reach forth no Relief to the Poor and Needy; this was that which so hightened their Unmercifulness, as it made it cry aloud to Heaven for Vengeance. Neither are these Aggravations of this Sin proper and peculiar to the *Sodomites*; 'tis too frequently so among us also: Many who even wallow in their Abundance, and think nothing too much that is bestowed upon their Lusts, grudge at every Penny that goes towards the Relief of their poor Neighbour.

And yet we need not much wonder at it, seeing 'tis the proper Effect of Pride, Riot, and Luxury, to make Men insensible

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sible of the Miseries of others; and without a Sense of them, there will be small Inclination to succour or relieve them.

Other Aggravations of this Sin are,

1. When God hath given in abundance to Men, by his extraordinary Blessing on their Estates, or in some Way of singular and unexpected Providence.

2. When Men have none to care for but themselves, and so have nothing to tempt them to be tenacious and sparing of what God hath bountifully bestowed on them.

3. In hard Times, when Objects of Pity are continually before their Eyes, and the Cries of them ever sounding in their Ears. In such Cases as these, 'tis foul Unthankfulness to God, and wretched Hard-heartedness against the Distressed, to deny them those Succours which might so easily be afforded them, and which both our Obligations to God, and their extream Necessities, so much call for. The Use of what hath been spoken is briefly this.

1. It may inform us of the horrid Guilt of all such as wilfully and studiously injure and oppress the Poor. If it be a great Sin not to *strengthen the Hands of the Poor and Needy*, What is

it to weaken them, either by using them
harshly and unmercifully when we em-
ploy them, or by unjustly detaining
from them what of Right belongs to
them? What is it for Men *to grind the
Faces of the Poor*, and by Cruelty and
Oppression *to beat them to pieces*? as
the Prophet speaks, *Isaiah 3. 15*. If he
that only neglects to shew Mercy, shall
have Judgment without Mercy, What an
heavy Doom awaits such Men, when
God shall arise to plead the Cause of the
Poor! And here let no Man please him-
self, and think he is secure enough be-
cause he hath to deal with those who
cannot lift up the Hand against them
that injure them; for he that injures a
poor Man who cannot make Resistance,
puts himself more immediately into God's
Hand, who hath in a special Manner,
undertaken to right those who are not
able to right themselves. *Rob not the
Poor because he is poor, neither oppress the
Afflicted in the Gate: For the Lord will
plead their Cause, and spoil the Soul of
those that spoiled them, Prov. 22. 22, 23*.
If any should be so atheistical as to think
there is no great Danger in this as long
as they know they are out of Mens
reach, let them not deceive themselves, for

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if God undertake to right poor Men, He will be sure to do it, and do it effectually when he once sets about it. He may exercise much Patience, and bear long with Oppressors; but *when he begins, he will make an end*, as He said, concerning the Execution of the Judgments which He had threatned against *Eli's* Family, 1 Sam. 3. 12. The Apostle saith, *'Tis a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God*, Heb. 10. 31. And will you presumptuously and wilfully fall into the Hands of God, by wronging those whom God hath undertaken to right, and whose Injuries He hath threatned to revenge? Tremble at the Thought of it, and be not so fool-hardy as *to run upon the thick Bases of his Buckler*. And if you have already been so bold and venturous, make a speedy Retreat in Season; be humbled for your Sin, and delay not to make full Satisfaction to those whom you have injured; and never dream of obtaining the Pardon of your Sin upon any other Terms. If you will not voluntarily right those whom you have injured, you will thereby put God to force you to do it; and that will create more Pain and Anguish to you. Remember

what

what Zophar saith of the Oppressor, Job 20. 14, 15. *His Meat in his Bowels is turned, it is the Gall of Asps within him: He hath swallowed down Riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his Belly.* If God give him a Vomit, that will be such a one as will make him Heart-sick. Wherefore be so wise for your self, and consult your own Good so much, as by timely Repentance and full Restitution of whatever you have unjustly gained, to prevent God's Coming upon you in those Ways which might be very dreadful unto you. *If we would judge our selves, so judge our selves as to reform whatsoever hath been amiss, we should not be judged of the Lord, 1 Cor. 11. 31.*

But you may say, if I should make full Amends to all that may have been injured by me, I should undo my self, and ruine my Family.

Answer. If the Case should be so hard with you, and the Circumstances under which you are so difficult, as you must part with all to right those that have been injured; yet even this were to be done, and to be done most willingly and cheerfully.

For 1. The Peace of a Man's Conscience is more to be valued than all the World; and 'tis impossible that this should be attained, as long as a Man shall willingly retain any thing which his Conscience tells him he hath no right to. For a Man still owns his Sin, and perseveres therein, so long as he is contented to hold fast and enjoy the Fruits thereof to the Injury of his Brother. He may pretend Repentance, and that he is sorry for what he hath done; but all in vain. Sound Repentance, and true godly Sorrow for Sin, makes a Man willing to *break off his Sin by Righteousness*, and to the utmost of his Power, to undo whatever hath been wrongfully done by him.

2. This Course is not the Way to undo a Man's Family, but to preserve it. Never was any Family undone by Righteousness. 'Tis Injustice and Oppression that undoes Families: Righteous Dealing, and a Restoring to the injured and oppressed what of Right belongs to them, remove the Curse of God from Families, and lay the surest Foundation of Prosperity, through God's Blessing, for the Future. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*, Prov. 14. 34. And as Righteousness

ness exalteth Nations, so it exalteth Families. *The Generation of the Upright shall be Blessed; Wealth and Riches shall be in his House, and his Righteousness endureth for ever, Psal. 112. 2, 3.*

3. Though a Man's Condition should be thereby straitned and brought very low, yet the meanest Condition with a quiet Conscience is more desirable, and more comfortable than the richest Confluence of all Manner of temporal Enjoyments without it. *Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without Right, Prov. 16. 8.* And hitherto of that first Use.

2. Let all those unto whom God hath given Ability, make Conscience of being helpful to others out of their Abundance, as God gives Opportunities, and presents true Objects of Charity unto them. Let it never be charged upon them as upon *Sodom*, that though they have *Fulness of Bread* themselves, enough to riot and play the Wontons with, yet they *strengthen not the Hands of the Poor and Needy*; others may perish for any Relief they can obtain from them.

And to induce them to do Good with their Estates to those that want, and to

do it cheerfully and liberally, Let them consider,

1. How frequently God hath enjoined this Duty. *If there be among you a poor Man, of one of thy Brethren, within any of thy Gates, thou shalt not harden thy Heart nor shut thy Hand from thy poor Brother; but thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto him; thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him.* Deut. 15. 7, 8, 10. *Cast thy Bread upon the Waters; give a Portion to Seven, and also to Eight,* Eccles. 11. 1, 2. *Give to him that asketh thee,* Matth. 5. 42. *Give and it shall be given unto you; good Measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over shall Men give into your Bosoms; for with the same Measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again,* Luke 6. 38. *To do Good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased,* Heb. 13. 16. *Charge them that are Rich in this World, that they do Good, that they be Rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,* 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18.

2. Consider that this is one great End why God hath given abundance to some, that out of their Plenty, the
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Wants of others might be supplied. Rich Men are but God's Stewards, and Almoners; entrusted indeed with a larger Portion than others have received, but to be employed to certain Uses which God hath prescribed, of which this is not the least, as is evident; for there is no other Use of Riches, which he hath in Scripture so much insisted on, and so often prest, and by so many Arguments urged, and by so many Promises encouraged as this, as might easily be shewed, if it were expedient at present so much to enlarge.

3. The Scripture makes it the very Character and Property of a good Man, to do Good to others with his Estate. You have his Description, *Psal. 112.* *The upright Man is gracious and full of Compassion,* Ver. 4. *A good Man sheweth Favour and lendeth,* Ver. 5. *He disperseth and giveth to the Poor,* Ver. 9. Hence 'tis that in the Language of the Scripture, the righteous and the merciful Man are one and the same. *The Righteous perisheth, and no Man layeth it to Heart, and merciful Men are taken away, none considering that the Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come,* Isa. 57. 1.

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4. They who have Bowels of Compassion for the Distressed, and out of Compassion are willing to succour them, may hope to find Mercy and Compassion with God themselves. As we deal with Men, so may we make Account that God will deal with us. If we shew no Mercy, we have little Reason to expect any. How many grievous Imprecations are poured out upon the Head of that wicked Man, *Psal. 109.* under whom the Person of Judas is represented and typified! *Let his Children be fatherless, and his Wife a Widow: Let his Children be continually Vagabonds and beg: Let them seek their Bread also out of their desolate Places: Let the Extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the Stranger spoil his Labour: Let there be none to extend Mercy to him, neither let there be any to favour his fatherless Children; Let his Posterity be cut off, and in the Generation following let their Name be blotted out: Let the Iniquity of his Fathers be remembered with the Lord, and let not the Sin of his Mother be blotted out. Let them be before the Lord continually, that He may cut off the Memory of them from the Earth.* Now what's the Cause of all this, and whence is it that such terrible

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The First Sermon.

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Judgments must light upon him and his? You have an Account thereof in the next Words, *Because that he remembered not to shew Mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy Man, that he might even slay the Broken in Heart, Ver. 16. of that Psalm.* But on the other Side, *With the Merciful God will shew himself merciful, Ps. 18. 25. And Blessed are the Merciful: for they shall obtain Mercy, Matth. 5. 7.*

Thus I have done with that fourth Sin of Sodom, and with the 49th Verse; I now go on to the 50th Verse; *And they were haughty, and committed Abomination before Me: Therefore I took them away as I saw good.*

They were Haughty: The Word in the Original, properly signifies to be elevated or lifted up. And this no doubt, was an Effect of their great Wealth and Prosperity. They were Rich, and abounded with outward Blessings, and therefore who but they? It may seem strange that the Prophet having mentioned their Pride in the former Verse, should here speak of it again. But this being not only a reigning Sin among them, but as it seems, the Cause of most of those other Provocations which were found in that Place, the Pro-

Prophet is not contented to have mentioned it once. And, as before he gave it the first Place, so here again, when he was to make mention of the Abomination which they committed, and the Punishment ensuing, he ushers in both the one and the other by their Haughtiness, which had a great Influence both upon their other Sins and their Punishments. Having spoken something of Pride before, I shall not add much more concerning it here.

The only thing which I shall a little touch at is what I have just now been speaking of by the Way : *That outward Prosperity lifts Men up.* I mean, this is ordinarily the Effect of temporal Prosperity, unless God be pleased by some Means or other to prevent it, which He doth sometimes by common or sanctifying Grace, sometimes by mingling some Afflictions with much outward Prosperity, or by such other Methods and Dispensations of Providence as to his Wisdom seemeth best. But when we say, outward Prosperity lifts Men up, it must not be so understood, as if we thereby laid the Blame upon Prosperity, but our own Corruption. God's Bounty and Goodness, and the temporal
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Blessings He pours in upon us, do not of their own Nature make us proud; There is no such intrinsical Malignity in them. 'Tis the Pride of our corrupt Nature that feeds, pampers, fattens and heightens it self by God's good Blessings which were never bestowed to such bad Purposes, nor have they any such malignant Influence or pernicious Operation, further then they are by us abused, and made Fewel for our Lusts to prey on, as wholesome Food through the ill Habit of the Body and the Distemper of the Stomach is turned into corrupt Humours, and instead of contributing to our Health, increaseth our Disease. But though God's Bounty must not bear the Blame of it, yet for the most Part so it is; as temporal Prosperity made the *Sodomites* haughty, so it doth us. Hereupon was that Caution grounded, which God was pleased to give his People, *Deut. 8. 11, 12, 13, 14. Beware lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly Cities and dwelt therein; and when thy Herds and thy Flocks multiply, and thy Silver and thy Gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied: then thy Heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the*

the Land of Egypt from the House of Bondage. And hence the Apostle enjoined Timothy, to charge them that are Rich in this World, that they be not high minded, 1 Tim. 6. 17. So in Regard that the Heighth of Honor and worldly Felicity might easily puff up the King, and make him forget himself, God commanded, that when he should sit upon his Throne, he should write him a Copy of the Law in a Book; and that he should read therein all the Days of his Life; that his Heart might not be lifted up above his Brethren, Deut. 17. 18, 19, 20. The Reasons why Prosperity begets Pride, may be divers.

1. When a Man hath got much of the World about him, and is in a flourishing Condition, every one almost is apt to court and flatter him; his Superiours cast a favorable Aspect upon him; his Equals give him Respects suitable to his Condition; his Inferiours bow and stoop to him; all which helps to cherish and encrease the natural Pride of the Heart.

2. He that hath more of the World than others have, is apt to value himself accordingly, and to think, that because he is really better than others, and deserves

serves more than they do, therefore he hath more than they have.

3. In Prosperity a Man wants those Helps that should keep down the Pride of his Heart, which is a Weed that will grow up of it self if it be not checked. They are Trials and Temptations, Troubles and Afflictions, Difficulties and Hardships that humble us; For such things as these make us reflect on our selves, and search into our Hearts, and consider our Ways. These are the things that bring Sin to Remembrance, that open our Eyes, and clear our Eyesight, that we may discern how loathsome and abominable we are. But in Prosperity these Matters for the most part are little thought of. See how the *Psalmist* describes the flourishing and prosperous Estate of many wicked Men, and the Consequents thereof, *Psal. 73.*

3, 4, 5, 6. *I was envious at the Foolish, saith he, when I saw the Prosperity of the Wicked. For there are no Bands in their Death, but their Strength is firm: They are not in Trouble as other Men, neither are they plagued like other Men. Therefore Pride compasseth them about as a Chain.*

Use I.

Use 1. This shews us the Reason why God doth not often bestow much of the great things of this World upon his Children. He knows that they would take hurt by Prosperity, and therefore out of his Care of them He keeps them low.

Use 2. It may also acquaint us with the Reason of that which we often observe: That Men of great Estates and High Places meet with many great Crosses and sore Afflictions; sometimes they are grievously afflicted in their Bodies, sometimes in their Minds, sometimes in their Estates, sometimes in their Relations, or some other Way. 'Tis rarely seen that they enjoy such a constant and uninterrupted Course of pure and unmixed Prosperity, but that something or other comes in to abate the Pleasure of their Enjoyments, and to give Check to their Happiness. God in his Wisdom, by these Mixtures of Affliction with their Prosperity, provides that they be not lifted up, whereof he sees they are in great Danger. *David*, from a mean Condition is advanced to a Crown; but with how much Trouble did he wear it? And in how many Respects was it a Crown of Thorns to him? How was he perpetually exercised

sed and followed with Afflictions, even to his Death? And the like we may observe in the rest of those good Kings, who swayed the Scepter after him: Who among them all can be found, that was exempt from Afflictions in one kind or other, and those very grievous and smarting? And so we may observe, That after great and Signal Successes, or special Manifestations of God to Men, which might puff them up, God hath on Purpose prepared a Corrective to keep them from being lifted up. Doth *Jephtha* obtain a Glorious Victory over the Children of *Ammon*? To humble him after that Success, his Daughter, and she his only Child, shall come out against him in his Return from that Victory, for the obtaining whereof he had vowed to sacrifice whatsoever should first meet him when he should return Victorious, *Judg. 11. 35.* When he comes home with Triumph, She must be in a Readiness to make him cry out, *Alas, my Daughter, thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of those that trouble me.* Is *St. Paul* caught up into the third Heaven? And doth God honor him with extraordinary Revelations that might have an ill Effect upon his corrupt

corrupt Nature? *Lest he should be exalted above Measure, a Thorn in the Flesh is given him, a Messenger of Satan to buffet him, 2 Cor. 12. 7.*

Use 3. It should teach Men to be watchful in Prosperity, over their Hearts, lest Pride creep on and get Possession of them. The more we have of the World, the greater is our Danger. The Psalmist speaking of prosperous wicked Men, saith, that God hath set them in slippery Places, *Psal. 73. 18.* The higher they are, the less safe are they. For height of outward Prosperity is an Occasion of Pride, and Pride makes Way for Ruine, according to that of *Solomon, Prov. 16. 18. Pride goeth before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall.*

Use 4. It may teach us not to desire or pursue the great things of this World, with too much Eagerness; for we know not how prejudicial they may be to us. We may be apt to promise our selves before hand, that we shall bear a prosperous Condition with much Moderation, and Equability of Spirit; that we shall never be so lifted up and changed by it for the worse, as many are: But if God should give us our Wishes, and try how
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we will carry our selves under such a Condition, it may so fall out that we may come to know our selves better than yet we do. Our Experience may teach us, that there was more Pride in our Hearts than we were aware of, or could discover, till Prosperity call'd it forth, and set it a Work. *Hezekiah*, as good a Man as he was, and as well acquainted as he was with himself, did not know how much of the Seeds of this Corruption lay hid in his Heart, till upon his miraculous Recovery out of Sickness, the honourable Embassy of the Messengers of the King of *Babylon* drew it forth, 2 *Chron.* 32. 31.

Use 5. It may teach those who are in a lower Rank, and meaner Condition for outward things, to rest satisfied with that Portion which God hath allotted them; neither being discontented with their own Condition, because straitened and wrestling with many Difficulties; nor maligning, or envying the Prosperity of others, the Lustre of whose outward Estate they see, but whose Temptations and Dangers they discern not.

And so much concerning the Haughtiness of the *Sodomites*.

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SERMON II.

Ezek. xvi. Ver. 49, 50.

Behold, This was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom; Pride, Fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness was in her, and in her Daughters; neither did she strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy: And they were haughty, and committed Abomination before Me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.

I Come now to speak of the last Sin in this Catalogue of their Provocations whereby they procured Destruction to themselves; and that is expressed in those Words, *And they committed Abomination before Me.* Which

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Expres-

Expression is indeed applicable to all the Sins beforementioned, they being all abominable in the Sight of God, and all great Sins being in the Language of the Holy Scriptures called Abominations: But yet the Circumstances of this Text being considered, it is much more probable that we are to understand by those Words the abominable Filthiness of the *Sodomites*, an instance whereof we have in the Violence they would have offered unto *Lot's* Guests, *Gen. 19. 5.* which kind of Sins are often called Abominations, *Levit. 18. Ver. 26, 27, 29, 30.* So *Hos. 9. 10.* God speaking of the Idolatry and Whoredom of the *Israelites*, when they joined themselves to *Baal-Peor*, saith, *They separated themselves unto that Shame, and their Abominations were according as they loved.* And thus, filthy Persons who defile themselves against Nature, are called ἐβδελυγμένοι, the abominable, *Rev. 21. 8.* Now there are two or three Reasons which may incline us to think that the abominable Filthiness of the *Sodomites* should be in this Place intended.

I. Because the Words come in after such a Manner as we cannot well understand them otherwise than as ad-

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ding some other particular Sin to those before mentioned. And that being granted that they contain another Instance of some great Sin that was common amongst them, what Sin can we better understand, than that abominable Filthiness which the Words will very properly signifie, and which the *Sodomites* were so notoriously guilty of?

2. As here this their committing Abomination goes immediately before their Destruction; *They were haughty, and committed Abomination before Me, therefore I took them away as I saw good.* So also in the History of their Overthrow, Gen. 19. their abominable Filthiness is related as that which did immediately forego, and occasion their Destruction.

3. Unless by those Words, *They committed Abomination before Me*, we understand their Filthiness, that their Sin, for which they were and still are most infamous, and which was the chief Sin that brought Destruction upon them; would not be at all mentioned in this Catalogue of their Sins; which is most improbable. Who can imagine that in a Catalogue of their Sins by which their Ruine was procured, there should be an Omission of that Sin which had the

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greatest Influence upon their Destruction?

Wherefore taking it for granted, that the Filthiness of the *Sodomites* is intended, by *their committing Abomination before the Lord*; the thing that I shall hence observe, is this;

That the Sin of Uncleanness is a very heinous and abominable Sin. In the Prosecution of this Point, I shall take the Sin of Uncleanness in its Latitude, and so speak of it as it comprehends, Fornication, Adultery, and all other kinds of Uncleanness, forbidden in the seventh Commandment. The Heinousness of this Sin we cannot better estimate than by those Judgments which God hath either inflicted or threatned to inflict for it. Men may easily be mistaken in their Opinion of the Nature and Quality of Sins: for though they seldom make very great Sins to be greater than they are, yet they often make them less than they are. But with God there can be no such Errour: *We are sure that the Judgment of God is according to Truth*, Rom. 2. 2. Wherefore we may infallibly conclude, that those Sins are the most heinous, which he punisheth or threatens to punish most severely. Now there is scarce any Sin, against which, God shews greater Severi-

ty,

ty, than the Sin of Uncleanness. If we should look no further than the Instance in the Text, how terribly did God punish this Sin in the *Sodomites*? This Sin, I mean chiefly, though they were also guilty of divers other grievous Sins; for wheresoever this abominable Sin reigns, 'tis not alone, but evermore attended with many other Sins, as it was in them. If any Man shall think the Sin of Uncleanness to have no such Heinousness as is pretended, let him consider the Circumstances of that dreadful Judgment, which the Righteous God brought upon them for it.

1. It was Fire; the most terrible and merciless Element, which God made Use of to punish them withal.

2. 'Twas not ordinary Fire, but Fire and Brimstone; Fire that was fed with that material in which it rageth most fiercely.

3. And this not lighting on them by small Drops, or thin Sprinklings, but in a full Shower.

4. And this Shower poured down upon them by the immediate Hand of God, who from Heaven thus took Vengeance on them for their Sin. *The Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah,*

Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, Gen. 19. 24.

5. And this terrible Fire did not only light on some Parts of those Cities, and destroy some of the Buildings, but utterly consumed and turned into Ashes the whole Cities, and all the Inhabitants of them, none escaping but *Lot* and his Family, as it follows in the Chapter last mentioned. And lest any Man should think that it was only the unnatural Sin of *Sodom*, which God thus punished, and not Fornication or Adultery, or such like Sins; *St. Jude* tells us that Fornication, which many account a small Fault, was one of the Sins which so highly incensed God's Wrath against them. *Sodom and Gomorrah*, saith he, *and the Cities thereabout, giving themselves over to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh, are set forth as an Example, suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire, Ver. 7.* In which Words of *St. Jude*, besides that he expressly mentions Fornication as one special Sin that drew down that terrible Judgment on them, We may by the Way further observe,

1. That he saith, Those Cities were set forth for an Example; God so terribly destroyed those Cities, that he might
make

make them Monuments of his Justice, and that he might thereby give Warning to all unclean Persons, and let them know what Severity they must expect from Him if they still go on impenitently in their Sin.

2. That he saith, *They suffered the Vengeance of Eternal Fire*; of Eternal Fire typically here, and really in Hell afterwards. They suffered the Vengeance of that Fire, which was a Type, a Resemblance, and Fore-runner of that Eternal Fire which in another World they also suffered: And that shews what will, without Repentance, be the Portion of unclean Persons hereafter, besides all the Judgments of God which they are liable unto here. And the temporal Judgments which it brings upon Men, are many and very great.

1. It provokes God to punish Men in their Bodies. This *Solomon* in several Places affirms. So *Prov. 7. 21, 22, 23.* speaking of the young Man void of Understanding, who is ensnared by the Flatteries and Allurements of the lewd Woman, he saith, *with much fair Speech she caused him to yield, with the Flattering of her Lips she forced him. He goeth after her straitway, as an Ox goeth to the*

the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks, till a Dart strike through his Liver, as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life. Till a Dart strike through his Liver, that is, till he be mortally wounded, by an incurable Disease, or some other Judgment of God seizing on him to his Destruction. So also Prov. 5. 11. Speaking of the Inticements of the strange Woman, and the extreme Danger of being drawn away by her, his Counsel is, Remove thy Way far from her, and come not nigh the Door of her House; lest thou mourn at the last, when thy Flesh and thy Body are consumed. What Zophar speaks of the Wicked more generally, Job 20. 11. that is more especially applicable to the unclean Person; His Bones are full of the Sin of his Youth, and it shall lie down with him in the Dust.

2. This Sin brings terrible Evils upon the Soul here in this Life, besides what a-waits it hereafter.

(1.) It deprives Men of that sound Judgment whereby they might discern between Good and Evil, and makes them sensual and brutish. This is that which the Prophet means when he saies, *That it takes away the Heart, Hosea 4. 11.*
For

For the *Hebrews* make the Heart to be the Seat of Reason and Understanding. So we read that those Heathens who addicted themselves to Uncleanneſs, were given over to a reprobate Mind, *Rom. 1. 28.* their Understandings were ſo darkened, and their Notions touching the moral Nature of things were ſo corrupt, that they could neither diſcern the Evil, nor the Danger of thoſe abominable Luſts which they defiled themſelves withal.

(2.) It alſo hardens the Heart ſo fearfully, as that thoſe who are given up to this Sin, very ſeldom ever recover out of it by Repentance. This *Solomon* hath alſo taught us, in his Deſcription of the lewd Woman, *Prov. 2. 18, 19.* ſaying, *Her Houſe enclineth unto Death, and her Paths unto the Dead: None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the Paths of Life:* That is, they very rarely return again; there is not one, or, there is ſcarce one of many of them that is ſoundly humbled and reclaimed. And is not this a fearful thing; enough to make thoſe tremble, who allow themſelves to live in this Sin?

3. It alſo brings the Curſe of God upon Mens Eſtates, ſo as what they enjoy,

joy, by Degrees melts away and comes to nothing. *It is a Fire, that consumeth to Destruction, and would root out all mine Increase,* saith Job, Chap. 31. 12. *Because of a whorish Woman a Man is brought to a Morsel of Bread,* Prov. 6. 26. *He that keepeth Company with Harlots, spendeth his Substance,* Prov. 29. 3. Nothing is more attested by Experience than this. How many plentiful Estates have been wasted, and great Families ruined by this Sin! So terrible and irresistable are the Judgments of God for this Sin, that no Mans Greatness can secure him against it; It is a Sin that destroyeth Kings, as Bathsheba in her Counsels to her Son Solomon speaks, Prov. 31. 3.

4. It stains Mens Reputation, and blasteth their good Name. *A Wound and Dishonour shall he get,* saith Solomon, of the Adulterer, *and his Reproach shall not be wiped away,* Prov. 6. 33.

5. It draws down the Judgments of God upon the Places where such Persons live. This was that which made the Land of Canaan vomit out her Inhabitants, Levit. 18. 24, 25. This was one of the Sins that hastened the Calamities of Jerusalem, when God delivered it into the Hands of the Chaldeans, Ezek. 22. 10, 11, 31. This

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31. This is one of the Sins that makes the Land mourn, *Hosea. 4. 2, 3.*

Use 1. Hence we may infer, That 'tis a Sign and an Effect of God's high Displeasure against any Man, when He gives him up to live and delight in this Sin. For it exposeth him, and lays him open to all the Judgments fore-mentioned. When God so far leaves any Man to himself, as to suffer him to run desperately upon all those terrible Judgments, you may well conclude, He is not a little angry with him: That Person hath highly displeased God some other Way, for which He thus punisheth him. This the Scripture expressly affirms. *The Mouth of a strange Woman is a deep Pit; he that is abhorred of the Lord shall fall therein, Prov. 22. 14. Again, Eccles. 7. 26. I find more bitter than Death, the Woman whose Heart is Snares and Nets, and whose Hands are Bands; who so pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the Sinner shall be taken by her. Nemo repente fuit turpissimus:* Men do not arrive suddenly at that height of Wickedness, as to allow themselves in this Sin: They come on to it by several other Steps and Degrees of Wickedness, God at last leaving them to fall into, and impenitently to persevere

vere in this Sin as a fearful Punishment of their other Sins. 'Tis a terrible Passage which we read concerning the Sons of *Eli*, 1 Sam. 2. 25. When they were gently and mildly reprov'd by their Father for their Sins, the Spirit of God saith, *They hearkned not unto the Voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them.* You who are given up to Uncleanness, and live in it without Remorse, fear and tremble to think whether God may not have thus left you to the Swinge of your filthy Lusts, because he will make you dreadful Examples of his severe Indignation against that Sin here, and punish you with everlasting Destruction in the World to come. You have, it may be, escaped Punishment hitherto: but let not that make you secure. You may think Judgment is fast asleep, and will never awaken to disturb your Quiet: but St. Peter saith, *The Damnation of ungodly Men slumbreth not*, 2 Pet. 2. 3. 'Tis awake to rise up against them, and come upon them unavoidably, unless by sound and speedy Repentance they prevent it.

Use 2. We may likewise hence infer, That 'tis a great Mercy to have been preserved from this Sin. In keeping you from this Sin, God hath secured you from

from all those Judgments, which attend it. Wherefore *Solomon* in the Place before mentioned, *Eccles. 7. 26.* speaking of the cunning and deceitful Harlot, saith, *He that pleaseth God shall escape from her.* Let none account it a small thing to have been kept from so great a Sin, and from all the fearful Judgments which befall Men for it. If you think it less matter of Thankfulness, because it never entered into your Heart to pollute your self with so foul a Guilt; you ever abhorred the Thought of it; take heed that this abate not your Thankfulness to God.

For 1. The Seeds of this Sin are in your corrupt Nature, and you have a natural Propension to it as well as to other Sins.

And 2. That your Heart hath been at such a Distance from it, and that you have always abhor'd the Thoughts of it, is to be ascribed unto God's Goodness to you, who hath kept under and suppressed the Corruption of your Nature. But here, they in a special Manner, have Cause to be thankful to God, for their Preservation from this Sin, who have been sensible of strong Inclinations to it, and who have also run presumptuously upon Temptations, and yet have not been

been overtaken with this foul Sin: These must needs attribute their Preservation to God's Power and Goodness, and with all Thankfulness acknowledge, That God only *withheld them from sinning against him*, as He said to *Abimeleck*, Gen. 20. 6.

Use 3. If this be so heinous a Sin, and if it draw down so many Judgments of God upon Men, How much doth it concern all those who have been guilty of it, to seek the Pardon thereof! If the many fore Temporal Judgments that are inflicted for it here do not move you, yet let what God hath threatned in Reference to the Life to come, awaken you out of your Security. *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* Heb. 13. 4. All such shall at the last Day be shut out of Heaven, and turned into Hell, if they still go on in their Sin impenitently. *Be not deceived; neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Mankind, shall inherit the Kingdom of God,* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. Again, *This ye know, That no Whoremonger, nor unclean Person, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ, and of God. Let no Man deceive you with vain Words: for*

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because of these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience, Eph. 5. 5, 6. The Unbelieving, and the Abominable, and Murtherers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, shall have their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, Rev. 21. 8.

Now though it be a most difficult thing to obtain the Pardon of this Sin, because it is wont to harden the Heart, and to make Men senseless and stupid, regardless of God's Wrath, and the Everlasting Condition of their Souls, so as they cannot set themselves with Seriousness and Earnestness to seek the Pardon of their Sin, without which they shall never obtain it; yet even these Persons are not in so desperate a Condition, but that 'tis possible they may find Mercy with God, yea 'tis certain, That they shall find Mercy with him, if they seek it as they ought; i. e. If they seek it seasonably and earnestly.

1. If they seek it seasonably, before the Day of Grace be over, and Death prevent them. *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon him while He is near*, Isai. 55. 6. *Behold, now is the accepted Time, Behold, now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2.

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2. If they seek it earnestly, and with that Intention of Mind and Seriousness, which a Business of such weighty and Eternal Importance requires. *Ye shall seek me and find me*, saith the Lord, *when ye shall search for me with all your Heart*, Jer. 29. 13. Now that the Pardon of this Sin in particular, may be obtained, if duly sought, is manifest,

1. Because no Sin is absolutely unpardonable, but only the Sin against the Holy Ghost. We have it from the Mouth of our Saviour himself, *Matth. 12. 31. All manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men: but the Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven.* As for all other Sins, how heinous soever they have been, yet upon our true Repentance, and seeking Pardon, the Guilt of them shall be done away. *Though a Mans Sins should have been as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; though they should have been red as Crimson, they shall be as Wool*, *Isai. 1. 18.*

2. The Pardon of this particular Sin hath been obtained by others, upon their Suit unto God for Pardon. In the 1 Cor. 6. 11. The Apostle having said, *Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Effeminate, nor Abusers of themselves with Man*

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kind shall inherit the Kingdom of God, he presently adds, *And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*

But now let no Man, hearing that the Pardon of this Sin may be obtained if duly sought, say within himself, though I have long continued to live in this Sin, yet I perceive, I may enjoy the Pleasures of it longer, and repent and obtain Forgiveness at last. God is I understand so merciful, and so ready to grant Pardon to those who seek it, that I need make no Question, but I shall obtain it at any time. If any Person should be so wretched, as thus to encourage himself in Sin, from the Mercy of God, turning his Grace into Lasciviousness, Let him know that 'tis the most dangerous thing to presume to sin, because God is ready to pardon truly humbled and repentant Sinners. What is this but to bless himself in his Heart, saying, *I shall have Peace though I walk in the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenness to Thirst?* The Lord himself hath declared, That He will not spare such a Man; his Anger and his Jealousie shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in the Book

of the Law shall light upon him, Deut. 29. 19, 20.

While you thus presumptuously harden your Heart, and strengthen your self in your Wickedness from the Consideration of God's Mercy to the Penitent, What Assurance have you, that God will give you the Grace of Repentance? He may justly cut you off in the midst of the very Act of your Sin when you next venture on it, so as you shall not have a Moment to sue for Pardon: or, if he suffer you to live longer, yet he may justly punish you with the dreadful Curse of an hardened and finally impenitent Heart, that you may never taste of that Mercy which you have so wickedly abused.

But God hath hitherto forbore to punish you; none of the forementioned Judgments have overtaken you; and therefore you hope there is no great Danger. He who hath thus far spared you, will (you trust) still bear with you.

This is indeed the Use, which Mens wicked Hearts are apt to make of the Patience and Forbearance of God. *Because Sentence is not executed speedily against an Evil Work, Therefore the Heart*

Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil, Eccles. 8. 11. But alas! in the mean Time, they consider not the End of God's long suffering, which is not to harden them in their Sin, but to *lead them to Repentance, Rom. 2. 4.* How dare you make Use of that as an Argument to keep you from Repentance, which God expects should lead you to it?

Again, whereas you make Account that none of the Judgments before spoken of, have yet come upon you, you are therein wofully mistaken. If you be one, who encourage your self to continue in your Sin from the long Patience of God towards you, 'tis certain, that the most fearful Judgment of all next to Hell it self, hath already taken hold of you; and that is Hardness of Heart. If your Heart were not fearfully hardened, you could never thus resolve to go on to *treasure up to your self Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of God's righteous Judgment,* and abuse the very Goodness and Forbearance of God to encourage you therein.

Besides, do you not know, that the longer God forbears to punish you, the

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more terribly will his Judgments fall upon you at last, if you still go on in your Impenitency? Never so flatter yourself as to believe, that God's Patience will never be at an End: The Time is coming, when you shall be taught the contrary by sad Experience, and when you shall pay dearly for your Abuse of God's Patience. I speak not this with an Intent to drive any Man to despair, but to awaken Men out of their Sin, and to stir them up to timely Repentance, that so Iniquity may not be their Ruine.

Use 4. The Sin of Uncleanness being so heinous, and the Judgments which God inflicts for it, so many and so great, it highly concerns all sorts to endeavour to keep themselves free from the Guilt thereof. Who but a Person that is utterly regardless of God and himself, and forsaken of his Reason, would run upon that Sin, which impenitently continued in, will waste his Estate, stain his Reputation, consume his Body, and eternally ruine his Soul? Wherefore the Scripture expresseth this Sin by the Name of Folly, and those who give themselves unto it, it represents as Simple ones and Fools. So *Gen. 34. 7.* when *Shechem* had defiled *Dinah*, 'tis said, that the Sons of *Jacob*

cob hearing of it, were grieved, and very wroth, because he had wrought Folly in Israel. So Deut. 22. 21. If a Damsel were defiled, living at home with her Parents, she must be brought forth to the Door of her Fathers House, and the Men of the City were to stone her with Stones till she died; because she had wrought Folly in Israel, by playing the Whore in her Fathers House. So also when the Gibeonites, Judg. 19. 22, 23. would have defiled the Levites Wife, the Master of the House said unto them, Nay, my Brethren, do not so wickedly; Seeing that this Man is come into my House, do not this Folly.

And when Amnon would have forced Tamar, to abuse her, as afterwards he did, Nay my Brother, saith she, do not thou this Folly. And I, whither shall I cause my Shame to go? And as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the Fools in Israel, 2 Sam. 13. 12, 13. In the same Manner Solomon speaks, to set forth the Sottishness and Simplicity of such as yield to this Sin. Having described the Harlot by her flattering Speeches, Prov. 7. At the Window of my House, saith he, I looked through my Casement, and behold, among the simple ones, I discerned among the Youths, a young Man void of Understanding, passing through

through the Street near her Corner, and he went the Way to her House, Ver. 6, 7, 8. And then afterwards Ver. 21, 22, describing how she assaulted him, and how he was overcome by her Allurements, he saith, With much fair Speech she caused him to yield, with the Flattering of her Lips she forced him. He goeth after her straitway, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks. This we see is the constant Language of the Scriptures: Uncleanneſs is Folly, and unclean Persons are the Fools of the Places where they live. That you may not be overtaken with this Sin, and be branded for a Fool among your People, make Use of theſe Preservatives, which are no new ones, but ſuch as the Scripture frequently mentions and inſiſts on, and are much better known, than applied and made Uſe of. Slight them not becauſe you know them already, no more than you would an old, well known, generally received and approved Antidote.

1. If you would be kept from this Sin, Remember that you are ever in God's Preſence, and that his Eye is upon you. The Eyes of the Lord are in every Place, beholding the Evil and the Good, Prov. 15.

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3. *He knoweth your down-sitting and your up-rising; He understandeth your Thought a far off. He compasseth your Path and your lying down, and is acquainted with all your Ways, Psal. 139. 2, 3. Whither can you flee from his Presence? If you say, the Darkness shall cover me, even the Night shall be Light about you. The Darkness hideth not from him, but the Night shineth as the Day; the Darkness and the Light are both alike to him; as it follows afterwards in the same Psalm. If this God's Omnipresence were soundly believed, and a lively Sense thereof were upon the Heart, how would any Man dare to commit this Sin in his Eye and Presence, which he would not commit in the Presence of a Child? Though he might so subtilly contrive and carry his Wickedness, as to be confident the Eye of the World should never take Notice of it, yet what could this avail him, so long as God's Eye is privy to it? What Atheism, or profane Contempt of God, and desperate affronting of his Justice and Holiness, is it, to think all is well, if you can conceal your Sin from Man, though God be an Observer of it, and a Witness to it? If you do indeed believe that he sees you, who is an Avenger of such Things, when*

when you are tempted thereunto, How can you choole but start back, and say with *Joseph*, Gen. 39. 9. *How can I do this great Wickedness and sin against God?* God, who is even now present with me, and who sees all that which I so carefully and studiously conceal from the World: The serious Thoughts and Consideration of God's Presence, will undoubtedly be a Sovereign Preservative against this Sin, to all those who have any Awe of God upon their Hearts. But for such as have not so much Fear of God, as to be deterred and with-held from sinning, by the Consideration of his Presence, so long as they have any Confidence that they can hide their Wickedness from the World, let them consider how vain and groundless their Confidence is touching this Matter. God, who knows all, hath divers Ways of laying open that secret Wickedness to the World, which they think, is so closely lockt up within their own Breasts, as it shall never see the Light.

(1) God can deprive you of the Use of your Reason, and smite you with Distraction, so as you shall proclaim your Shame, and lay open all the Circumstances of your Sin to all that come near you.

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(2) He can inflict such Terrors of Conscience for your Sin, as you shall be enforced to lay it open, and never be at rest till you have done it.

(3.) He can compel your Companions and Partners in your Sin, to discover that which you think shall be for ever buried. Wherefore as long as God knows your Sin, who can so easily and so many Ways make the World acquainted with it, What Security have you, that your most secret Sins shall never come to light? Have you any Promise or Assurance from God, that he will keep your Counsel? Who are you, that you should expect that Favour from him, who have so highly and daringly provoked him?

2. Be careful to avoid all Occasions of this Sin; and keep you at a Distance from whatever may be a Temptation thereunto. When *Solomon* would fortifie Men against this Sin, his Counsel is, that they should not adventure to come near the strange Woman, *Remove thy Way far from her, and come not nigh the Door of her House*, Prov. 5. 8. A Christian must *abstain from all Appearance of Evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. and much more from all real Occasions of, and Provocations

cations to Sin. Neither may any Man so presume upon his own Strength, as to think he may run upon Temptations without Danger.

For (1.) Every Man hath that sinful Corruption and Propension to Evil, that exposeth him to be infected and drawn aside by Temptations. *Job*, though a Man eminent for Holiness, was so sensible hereof, that he *made a Covenant with his Eyes*, that he might not look upon such Objects as might tempt him to sin, *Job* 31. 1. The corrupt Nature of Man being like Tinder, ready to be set on Fire, by every Spark of Temptation that lights on it, our Safety lies in keeping our selves as far off from Temptations as we can.

(2.) Besides our aptness to be wrought upon, and to take Impressions from Temptations, when, in confidence of our strength, we presumptuously and fool-hardily run upon Temptations, we thereby tempt God, and provoke him to leave us to our selves, and to make us know by woful Experience, how frail we are. Wherefore make sure Account, that you are no longer out of Danger of this Sin, than while you find in your self a tender and conscientious Care and Endeavour to

avoid

avoid all the Occasions of it. Now the Occasions of it are many; I shall mention the chief of them. Such are,

1. Debauched Company and ungodly Acquaintance. These are the Devil's Instruments to tempt others into all those lewd and filthy Courses unto which they have addicted themselves. He that delights in filthy Company shall not long keep himself chaste. Sin is in Scripture typified and resembled by *Leprosie*; and we read of the *Plague of the Heart*, 1 King. 8. 38. And indeed neither the Leprosie nor the Plague is more infectious than Sin is. Experience is too manifest a Proof hereof. Young Men of civil Behaviour, and whose former Conversation was not stained with any notorious Vice, how suddenly are they perfectly debauched, when once they fall into lewd Company! I wish this Place could not give sad Instances hereof. But above all other Acquaintance, that of the strange Woman, of Light and immodest Persons of that Sex is to be avoided. For these lewd Creatures have such Artifices and Allurements to draw into Sin, as offer a kind of Violence to those who come so near them, as to be within the Reach of their Temptations. This bewitching

witching Power and Efficacy of the Harlot's Temptations, *Solomon* hath set forth in his Representation of the Issue of her Treaty with the young Man, *Prov. 7. 21. With much fair Speech she caused him to yield, with the Flattering of her Lips she forced him.* He was not able to resist the Importunity of her Flatteries and Inticements. Again, speaking of the same lewd Woman, *Eccles. 7. 26.* he saith, *Her Heart is Snares and Nets, and her Hands are Bands:* Snares and Nets to catch Men in, and Bands to hold them fast when she hath taken them. Now who that had not a Mind to be taken, would wilfully run upon these Nets and Snares?

2. Obscene Talk and unchaste Speeches, are another Occasion of the Sin of Uncleaness, which must be carefully avoided by those who would be kept from that Sin. Impure and filthy Language, rotten and unsavory Speeches, as they come from an unclean Heart, so they secretly convey Filthiness into the Hearts of Men; and they cherish and increase, stir up and inflame that Corruption that is in the Heart. Let no Man plead for such rotten Talk, and say, There is no Hurt in it. The Apostle saith,

saith, *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners*, 1 Cor. 15. 33. Hence it is that we are so often cautioned against the Abuse of the Tongue this Way. *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth*, Eph. 4. 29. *Put off all these, Anger, Wrath, Malice, Blasphemy, and filthy Communication out of your Mouth*, Coloss. 3. 8. *Fornication, and all Unclean-ness, let it not be once named amongst you; neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking, nor Jest- ing*, Eph. 5. 3, 4. And as a Man must refrain from such corrupt Communication himself, so he must not listen to such lewd Speeches when uttered by others, but by Reproof, endeavour to silence and shame the Speakers: Or, if that cannot be done, if they will still go on in their filthy Talk, he must go out of their Company; for such impudent filthy Talkers are not fit for the Society of modest and sober Christians, such as all should be, and as their Profession as Christians obligeth them to be.

3. The Reading of filthy Books, such as are many Plays, Romances and other amorous Toys, good for nothing but to infect and debauch the Readers, and to steal away that precious time which
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is allotted us here for better Purposes. And yet, O how many are there, who prefer the Reading of such lewd Writings before the Reading of the Holy Scriptures! How many are there, who can afford to throw away many Hours daily upon such Trash, who, it may be, can hardly find Time to read one Chapter in the Bible throughout the whole Week! It may be, they improve their Fancy and gain a little vapouring and frothy Language, and in the mean Time, defile their Hearts, and ruine their Souls. And here, I might fitly mention the beholding of filthy Pictures, and the frequenting of such Stage-Plays, in which lewd Speeches, and lascivious Gestures are used; and in which, Vice is acted, and set forth in such a Manner, as it may best commend it self to the Eyes, Ears, and Fancies of the Spectators, and steal into their Hearts. These lewd Plays are the very Sinks of Sin, and Schools of all manner of Filthiness and Uncleanness; and no doubt, but the Liberty they take this Way, hath been one great Cause of that abominable Filthiness, and impudent Lewdness of our Times, which so abounds amongst us, as Posterity will blush to read

read the Histories of it, though we do not blush at it, or count it any matter of Shame, but rather glory in it; to such an height of Impudence in Wickedness, have many arrived.

4. Another Occasion of Uncleanneſs is Idleneſs. This was one Cauſe of the Filthineſs of the *Sodomites*, as appears in the Text. And ſo *David*, committing the Managing of his Wars abroad unto *Joab*, and giving himſelf to Eaſe and Idleneſs at home, fell into that foul Sin with *Bathſheba*, which he might have been kept from, if he had been in the Field with his Armies. Idleneſs is an Occaſion of Uncleanneſs ſeveral Ways.

(1.) As it unbinds the Mind and leaves it looſe, and ſets it at Liberty for the Entertainment of Luſts. While a Man is taken up with ſome honeſt Employment, his Mind is exerciſed, and the Faculties of the Soul are intent upon it. Though his Employment be outward, and that of the Body, yet the Mind and Underſtanding are alſo imploied in directing and ordering the Motions and Actions of the Body. But when a Man is idle, his Soul being at Liberty, and having nothing to do, the inward Corruption of the Heart ſets it a-work. The

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Soul having nothing else to busie it self about, filthy Thoughts, unclean Lusts and inordinate Desires possess it, and hurry it up and down; and these at length, break out into external Acts of Sin, unless they be restrained, and seasonably suppress.

(2.) Idleness exposeth Men to many Temptations from without. An idle Person is a Prey for any idle and lewd Company, that come to tempt him into the Ways of Uncleanneſs and all manner of Debauchery; whereas if he were fixed on some good Imployment, lewd Persons either would not at all assault him, or would not so easily take him off from Business.

(3.) It lays him open to the Temptations of Satan, who evermore assaults the idle Person with Confidence to prevail, and provides Work for him that hath none of his own.

(4.) Idleness and Ease pamper the Body, and thereby feed and heighten Lust, which honest Labour would tame, keep down and abate. They therefore who would keep their Souls chaste and pure, and who would *possess their Vessels in Sanctification and Honour*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 *Thess.* 4. 4. must betake them-

themselves to some lawful Imployment, attend diligently on it, and keep close to it.

5. Intemperance is another Occasion of Uncleanneſs. The *Sodomites* are alſo an Inſtance hereof, among whom Fulneſs of Bread made Way for, and furthered that abominable Filthineſs which abounded in that Place. As for Exceſs in drinking, *Solomon* tells us what the Effects of it are, *Prov.* 23. 31, 32, 33. *Look not thou upon the Wine when it is red, when it giveth his Colour in the Cup, when it moveth it ſelf aright: At the Laſt it biteth like a Serpent, and ſtingeth like an Adder: Thine Eyes ſhall behold ſtrange Women, and thine Heart ſhall utter perverſe Things.* And the Prophet joineth Whoredome and Wine together, *Hoſea* 4. 11. *Whoredome, and Wine, and new Wine, take away the Heart.* Neither can it otherwiſe be, but that it ſhould be a great Incentive to Uncleanneſs, eſpecially in thoſe who are otherwiſe addicted to that Sin, forasmuch as it inflames the Blood, puts the Spirits into diſorderly Motion, and often deprives a Man of that Uſe of Reaſon, whereby his unruly Affections might be ordered and kept under Government. And then as for

Excess in Eating, the Prophet *Jeremiah* will acquaint us with the Consequents thereof. *When I had fed them to the Full, they then committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlot's Houses. They were as fed Horses in the Morning; every one neighed after his Neighbours Wife, Jer. 5. 7, 8.* The same Effect of luxurious Feasting, and high Fare, *St. James* intimates, *Chap. 5. 5. Ye have lived in Pleasure and been wanton: Ye have nourished your Hearts as in a Day of Slaughter; that is, as in a Day when Sacrifices were slain, and Feasts made.* So then he that would be chaste, must be sober and temperate in the Use of Meat and Drink, and not indulge to those Excesses, which feed and increase Lust, and are to it as Fuel to the Fire. And so much of that second thing to be done by those who would be kept from the Sin of Uncleanness; they must carefully avoid all Occasions of that Sin, and chiefly those which I have now mentioned.

3. He that desires to be kept from the Sin of Uncleanness, must keep his Heart with all Diligence, suppressing the first Motions of Lust. In the Heart is
Lust

Lust first kindled, and thence it breaks forth into outward Filthiness. *Out of the Heart come evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries, Fornications, Matth. 15. 19.* Solomon therefore among other Things, which he prescribes as Preservatives against the Flattering Allurements of the evil Woman, saith, *Lust not after her Beauty in thine Heart, Prov. 6. 25.* And here also Care must be taken, that your Thoughts and Fancy be restrained, and so governed as they be not exercised about impure Objects. Unclean Thoughts and obscene Imaginations and Fancies stir up Concupiscence; which is as it were the Conception of Lust, after which follows the Birth thereof in external Acts of Impurity; according to that of St. James, *Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth Sin, Jam. 1. 15.* And whosoever shall give way to the entertaining of impure Thoughts, Fancies, and secret Lustings, though he proceed no further, though he should never be guilty of any outward Uncleanness, yet should he be abominable in God's pure Eye, and he would account him as polluted, and defiled with that Sin which his Heart takes Pleasure in and hankers after, *Whosoever looketh on a Woman to*

lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart, Matth. 5. 28. And as a Man must keep his Heart if he would be chaste, so he must keep a Watch over his outward Senses, his Eyes and Ears; for these are the Inlets of Sin, and by these Windows, Lust gets into the Heart. The Apostle speaks of *Eyes full of Adultery*, 2 Pet. 2. 14. wanton Eyes that delight in beholding Objects, whereby Lust may be kindled. And there are also Ears full of Adultery; Ears that are pleased with lewd Songs and filthy Communications; Ears that are always open to receive such things with Delight and Greediness, and to transmit them to the Heart. But of this I have spoken something before in the Occasions of this Sin, and therefore shall not need to add any more here.

4. He must give himself to the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and daily exercise himself in the Word of God, so far as his Condition and Calling will permit. And such as cannot read, must use such other Helps as they can, to get Acquaintance with the Truths of God contained in the Scripture, and often think of them. The Word of God is an excellent Preservative against all

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Uncleanness. *Wherewithal shall a young Man cleanse his Way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word, Psal. 119. 9. When Wisdom entreth into thine Heart, and Knowledge is pleasant unto thy Soul, Discretion shall preserve thee, Understanding shall keep thee; to deliver thee from the strange Woman, even from the Stranger which flattereth with her Words, which forsaketh the Guide of her Youth, and forgetteth the Covenant of her God, Prov. 2. 10, 11, 16, 17. The Commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is Light, and Reproofs of Instruction are the Way of Life; to keep thee from the evil Woman, from the Flattery of the Tongue of the strange Woman, Prov. 6. 23, 24.*

5. Hereunto must be added earnest and constant Prayer unto God, that he would be pleased to purifie their Hearts, to rebuke and subdue their Lusts, and so powerfully and graciously to restrain them, as that they may never defile their Bodies with any kind of Uncleanness, but preserve them in all Purity and Chastity, that they may be *Meet-Temples for the Holy Ghost*. This was David's Prayer after he had defiled himself with Bathsheba, *Create in me a clean Heart,*

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O God,

O God, and renew a right Spirit within me, Psal. 51. 10.

6. If notwithstanding the due Use of all other means, he cannot obtain the Gift of Continency, he must make Use of that Remedy which God hath in that Case provided, which is lawful Marriage. And Marriage in that Case, is not only permitted, but enjoined as a Duty. *To avoid Fornication, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman have her own Husband, 1 Cor. 7. 2. And if they cannot contain, let them marry, it is better to marry than to burn, 1 Cor. 7. 9.* So then, though any should be able to refrain from polluting themselves with outward Acts of Uncleaness, yet if they cannot be freed from inward Burnings and Lustings, they are called to alter their Condition as God gives Opportunity thereof, and they sin if they do not.

But what then shall we think of those abominable Persons, who partly out of Contempt of the Ordinance and holy Institutions of God (for such is Marriage) and partly out of an Unwillingness to be troubled with some Incumbrances which necessarily attend a married Estate, and partly to give the greater Freedom and Liberty to their wandring
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and unsatiable Lusts, not only speak disgracefully and reproachfully of Marriage, but professedly and impudently choose to range up and down, and wallow in all manner of Filthiness, rather than to come under the Laws and Restraints of Wedlock. A most execrable Wickedness, and to be abhorred by all that bear the Name of Christians.

Now that you may be the more careful to make Use of these and all other good Means for the avoiding of this Sin; and to set your Hearts at the greater Distance from it, and work in you a greater Abhorrence and Detestation of it; I shall lay before you some of those several Arguments, and those only, which the Apostle makes Use of to dissuade Christians from this Sin in the 1 Cor. 6.

1. Your Bodies are given you to be employed in the Service of God, and to be consecrated to his Honour. *The Body is not for Fornication, but for the Lord,* Ver. 13. How foul and horrid a Sin then is it to pollute and defile your Body with that abominable Sin, which should be consecrated to God; to devote your Body to the Service of your filthy Lusts, which

The Second Sermon.

which should be devoted to the Service of your Creator, and was given you for that Purpose?

2. Your Body, though vile, frail, and corruptible, yet is capable of Immortality and Glory. The Day is coming, when *This corruptible Body shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality: 1 Cor. 15. 53.* when, if we belong to Christ, *He shall change this our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his Glorious Body, Phil. 3. 21.* And this is the Argument which the Apostle insists on in the 14th Verse of that 6th Chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians. God hath raised up the Lord, and will also raise us up by his own Power.* He there speaks of the Resurrection of Believers, of the Resurrection to Glory and Eternal Happiness: And so the Force of his Argument is this; Shall we here debase and dishonour these our Bodies by abusing them to Uncleanneſs, which we hope and expect shall be hereafter raised in Glory, and be made like unto the Glorious Body of the Son of God?

3. Your Bodies (if you be what you profess your selves to be, true Believers) are the Members of Christ. *Shall we then take the Members of Christ, and make*
them

them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid, Ver. 15. What Dishonour would that reflect on Christ? Could you offer him an higher Indignity? Could you do any thing more dishonourable and ignominious to your own Bodies, than so to degrade and debase them, which Christ hath been pleased so highly to honour and dignifie?

4. *The Bodies of Believers are the Temples of the Holy Ghost*, Ver. 19. And how dare you profane and defile his Temple? Will the Spirit of Holiness, think you, vouchsafe to own that for his Temple which you have so abused? Will he endure to make that the Place of his Holy Presence, and Inhabitation, which you by your filthy Sins make so loathsome and abominable?

5. *We are bought with a Price*, Ver. 20. with the invaluable Price of the precious Blood of the *Son of God*: You are intirely bought with that invaluable Price; your Bodies as well as your Souls are comprehended in the Purchase. And on that Account you stand obliged to glorifie God in your Bodies as well as in your Spirits, as there the Apostle infers. Hath Christ purchased your Bodies for his Service at so dear a Rate, and will you rob him of his

his Purchase? Yea, will you take that which he hath purchased for his Service, and addic^t it, enslave it to the Service of your Lusts? If you have any Sense of the unspeakable Love of Christ to you, in purchasing you with his Blood, do not this *abominable thing which his Soul hates.*

And so I have at Length done with that fourth Use.

SERMON

SERMON III.

Ezek. xvi. Ver. 49, 50.

Behold, This was the Iniquity of thy Sister Sodom ; Pride, Fulness of Bread, and abundance of Idleness was in her, and in her Daughters ; neither did she strengthen the Hand of the Poor and Needy : And they were haughty, and committed Abomination before Me : therefore I took them away as I saw good.

Use 5. **I**F the Sin of Uncleaness be so heinous, the Displeasure of God against it so great, and the Judgments attending it so grievous and terrible, then certainly in a very dangerous Condition is that Place and People where

where this Sin is become so common, bold and impudent, that neither Fear of God, nor Shame among Men, can check or restrain it. And it must be confessed, that this is very much the present Condition of this Nation, in which this great Sin never so abounded, never was so daring and shameless. And that which greatly aggravates our Sin, and encreaseth our Danger, is, that the terrible Judgments of God that have been amongst us, have been so far from reforming us, that we still go on in this and our other Sins with as high an hand as ever, as if we were resolved not to amend, though God should multiply his Judgments upon us, till he break us to Pieces, and destroy us. Methinks, I hear God saying concerning us, as once he did concerning the Jews, upon the like Occasion, *Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this,* Jer. 5. 9. Shall I not bring yet heavier Judgments upon them than any they have hitherto felt? Certainly as the Case stands with us, in Respect of our great Sins, and as great incorrigibleness under the heavy and severe Hand of God, he must be given up to a great Measure of Security and Stupidity, that
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is not in some Degree, afraid of what other Judgments may be coming upon us. Though we are not acquainted with God's secret Thoughts and Counsels concerning us, yet it will be our Wisdom to make the best Provision we can against an evil Day. And we cannot better provide for our Safety, than

1. By labouring to keep our selves untainted with the great and crying Sins of the Times, least partaking with others in Sin, we also partake with them in Punishment.

2. By hindring Sin in others as much as in us lies.

3. By being humbled for the Sins of others, and by bewailing and mourning over all those Evils which we cannot reform. When God was about to destroy *Jerusalem*, for the Sins thereof, He gave Order, That a Mark should be set upon the Foreheads of the Men that did sigh and cry for all the Abominations that were done in the midst of it. And he gave special Charge to those whom he had appointed to be the Executioners of his Justice, saying, *Go ye through the City and smite; let not your Eye spare, neither have ye Pity: Slay utterly Old and Young, both Maids, and little Children, and Women,*
but

but come not near any upon whom is the Mark, Ezek. 9. 4, 5, 6. Next to personal Reformation, and Immunity from the Contagion of common and reigning Sins, there is nothing that will give us better Security, that God will be a Sanctuary to us in the Time of publick Judgments, than a conscientious Endeavour to hinder, bewail, and mourn for Sin in others. And so I come to the last Use which I shall make of this Point.

Use 6. This calls upon Magistrates, to make Use of that Power which is put into their Hands, for the Punishment of this foul Sin. Hereunto the Duty of their Place obligeth them, the Magistrate being *the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil*, Rom. 13. 4. And there are sundry Reasons, that should prevail with him to punish this Sin severely.

1. For vindicating the Honour of God, whose Name is highly dishonoured by such Sins amongst Christians; and 'tis some small Vindication of his Honour, when they pass not without some severe and exemplary Punishment.

2. For humbling and reclaiming the Offenders, who by Impunity are emboldened and hardened in their Sin.

3. For

3. For preventing the like Sin in others, who observing that filthy Persons escape Punishment, are encouraged to the like Filthiness themselves; which they would not so easily be drawn into, if the constant Severity of Punishment impartially inflicted on all Offenders whatsoever, were held forth as a flaming Sword to deter them.

4. For taking away the Reproach that is brought upon the Places where such foul Sins abound. A Shame, a foul shame it is unto any Place, that such Sins should be committed, frequently committed, and seldom punished.

5. For averting and keeping off the judgments of God, hanging over the Places where such notorious Sins are committed. For until due Punishment be inflicted on such Offenders, we have no Reason to hope, that God's Anger is pacified. It was *Phineas* his zealous Severity in punishing this Sin, that turned away *God's Wrath from the Children of Israel*, Numb. 25. 11.

These Considerations being of such importance, 'tis strange that this heinous Sin should be so overlook'd and winked at in many Places, as it is. As for this Place, that this Sin hath of late Years
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been so rife here, and still is, as is greatly to the Shame and Reproach of the Place, cannot be denied by any that will not undertake to plead for the Sin, and to maintain that there is no matter of Reproach in it. And I think, it can a little be denied, that too much Slackness and Remisness in punishing this Sin, hath been one great Cause of the monstrous Increase, and Commonness of it both here, and elsewhere.

But there being so many, and such weighty Reasons to induce Magistrates to punish this Sin, whence comes it to pass, that 'tis so much neglected?

Ans. 1.st 'Tis possible that some Magistrates, in some Places, being conscious to themselves of their own Guilt this Way, may have neither the Courage nor the Face to punish the Sin which they allow themselves in. In that Case he that should be severe against others might expect, they should bid him cast the first Stone at himself. I charge none here; but if there should be any such in any Rank, or Place, or Degree of Authority, they should do well to charge and judge, and humble themselves before him, who saith, *He will come near to Judgment, and be a swift Witness against*

eat- against the Adulterers, Mal. 3. 5. And
the 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the Hands
will of the living God, Heb. 10. 31.

and 2dly, Others mind only their private
r of Interest, and trouble not themselves with
the Concernments of the Publick. And
ack- yet if the Matter be well weighed, 'tis
Sin their own private Interest also that the
non- Judgments of God be kept off from the
f it Places where they live; and likewise that
they derive not the Guilt of other Mens
uch Sins upon themselves, which they most
rates certainly do by neglecting to punish
t to them.

Ma- 3dly, By the Sins of Fornication and
ous Adultery, other Mens outward Estates
this are not so immediately and directly
age touched and prejudiced, as by Theft,
which Cheating, Robbery, and the like Sins.
Cafe And their Estates being not touched by
ners them, Men are the more cold and indiffe-
rent in the Prosecution and punishing
call of such Offenders. If a Man steal but
arge the Value of a Shilling or less, and Proof
such thereof be made, he shall be sure to be
punished; but a lewd Person may com-
mit the foul Sin of Uncleanness once and
Au- again, it may be the third and fourth
arge Time, and no Punishment shall be infli-
be cted: Or, if one or two be sometime

punished, it may be, more than twice as many go unpunished. To say nothing of Partiality in punishing, catching the small Flies, and suffering the great ones to escape. While Punishment is so rarely and so unevenly inflicted, who can wonder, that this Sin should put on a Whores Forehead, and dare to affront all sober Persons, and Authority it self? But to return, this Sin (as I said) seems not to touch Mens outward Estates, and therefore they care not whether it be punished or no. So then it seems, it matters not how much God be dishonoured, and our Holy Religion stained and reproached by our Sins, so long as our Estates are untoucht. But if God should for our luke-warm Connivance at the Sins of *Sodom*, send the Judgment of *Sodom* upon us; if as he hath done in several other Places; and as he hath threatened us several times, He should kindle a terrible Fire in the midst of us, then we would find that this Sin also toucheth our Estates as well as Theft or Robbery.

Note,
This Sermon was
preached
at Northampton
a little
before the
dreadful
Fire there.
Sept. 3.
1675.

4thly, Some count it a Disparagement to them to meddle with the Punishment of Uncleanness. They are not willing to foul their Hands with this
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dirty Sin. But to punish foul Sins is not to foul, but to wash and cleanse your Hands from the Guilt of them. And 'tis your Honour, not your Disparagement to shew Zeal against Sin. What were *Zimry* and *Cozby*, Numb. 25? Were they not such impudent filthy Persons as too many among us? And did *Phineas* foul his Hands, or stain his Reputation by running them both through with a Javeline? No; It was his Signal Honour, and will be as long as that his heroick Exploit shall be upon Record, and be read in the Book of God. *It was counted to him for Righteousness in all succeeding Generations*, Psal. 106. 31. And it will be so esteemed, as long as God hath a Church upon Earth.

Arise therefore and be doing, all you that have an Interest in the Government of this Place; Look up and down the Town, enquire and make diligent Search after all those who cast Dirt upon this Place, and by their filthy Practices, endeavour to make it a Taunt, and a By-word, and a Proverb to all the Country round about you. If you have any Sense of the Honour of God, or of the Credit of Religion, or of the Reputation and Safety of this Place; if

you have any Love to the Souls of those who have offended, or to the Souls of those who are in danger of being tempted to offend, unless Sin be more discountenanced, and more constantly and more severely punished; yea, if you have any Love to your own Souls, any Care of discharging the Trust committed to you, and of wiping off from your selves the Guilt of those Sins which, as it is to be feared, much through your Neglect, or sinful Indulgence are committed; shew your Zeal and Indignation against all Sin, but especially against that Sin, the Heinousness and Danger whereof hath been represented to you. Take up a Resolution, that not one Offender in this kind shall escape your Censure for the Future; and that you will use the utmost Severity which the Laws prescribe, for stopping the Course of that bold and impudent Wickedness which bids Defiance to your Authority. And if there should be found any in this Place, who make a Trade of Uncleanness, and open a Shop to invite and draw in Customers to be debauch'd and made a Prey by them, so far as there is any Law to justify you (and it were great Pity there should be none) Rid the Town of them, and

and send them away with all those Brands of Reproach and Ignominy which they deserve. If a Man infected with the Plague, came into the Town, how zealously would all concern themselves to get him dispatht out of Town immediately! He should not be permitted to stay here one Night. Let me tell you, such lewd Creatures have the Plague - Sore running upon them, yea they are the Plague of any Place. Let every Man therefore, who hath any true Zeal and Affection for the Town, lend his utmost Assistance for the Discovery of such, if any such be, and for the Removing of them.

And so I should have dismissed this Point, but that it may not be amiss, that I should first speak a Word or two in Answer to an Objection that may possibly be made by some against what hath been delivered. There may be those, perhaps, that may be ready to say, What is all this to us, that you have so long discoursed of, and so largely insisted on? We are not concerned in it, it belongs to others; but we should have been glad to have heard something by which we our selves might have been edified.

To this I answer, 1. That in mixed Congregations, consisting of several sorts of People, and made up of Persons that are in various and different Conditions and Circumstances, a due Regard must be had of all, and all must be spoken to as Occasion is offered; neither must one sort think themselves neglected while Respect is had to others. It were very unreasonable and very uncharitable, that any one sort of Auditors, should think to ingross all to themselves, and that no Regard should be had of any but themselves. There are indeed two Extreams in this matter, both which must be avoided and declined. Some desire to hear nothing but what concerns themselves, and comes home to their own particular Conditions: To these Persons, all Discourses that concern others, are tedious and irksome, and they are apt to think that all the Time is lost which is spent in attending to them. Others again, on the other hand, gladly hear what concerns other Men; They are well pleased when the Sins of other Men are reprov'd, when their Duty is fully represented to them and laid before them, and when they are urg'd and press'd to the Performance of it; as also when they are

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blamed and condemned for the Neglect of their Duty; and they like that Discourse best, in which this is done most effectually, most freely and impartially. But in the mean Time, the same Persons care not how little is said that concerns themselves: If their own Sins be reprov'd; if they be exhorted and stirred up to a more consciencious Performance of the Duties which they have shamefully neglected; These things are so unacceptable to them, that they soon grow weary and even impatient of hearing them. But to return to those who run upon the other Extream; I say they must be contented that the Condition of others be regarded, and that others be spoken to as well as themselves.

2. I add, That they should be so far from being troubled at it, that all that is spoken comes not home to themselves, and suits not their own present Condition, but rather concerns others; I say, they should be so far from being troubled at it, that they should be glad, that any thing is delivered that may do Good to any one Soul in the Congregation. If we have any true Love for the Souls of others, any sincere desire of their eternal well-being and Happiness, we shall rejoice
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at any thing that may conduce thereunto.

3. There is nothing that concerns other Men, There is no Truth that can be delivered with Relation to them and their Condition, but may some way or other be beneficial to our selves, if we know how to improve it. To instance in some particulars.

1. Are those Sins reprov'd in others which we are not guilty of, nor ever were?

(1.) This gives us just Occasion of great Thankfulness to God, who hath kept us from those Sins: for if we had been left to our selves, we might have been as bad as others, and worse. There is that original Sin in us, that natural Proclivity and Propension to what is Evil, that would have carried us into the same Sins, had not God's restraining or sanctifying Grace with-held us. And Satan also might have hurried us into those Sins, if God had not chained him up, and set Bounds to his Malice, Rage, and Fury against us.

(2.) This also gives us just Occasion of being humbled in the Consideration of our own sinful and depraved Nature, which is the very same with that of other Men, and therefore, in their Sins

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we see what we our selves are: For though we be not actually guilty of those Sins, yet we have in us, and carry about with us, the Seed, the Spawn and Principles of those Sins.

2. Is the great Evil and extreme Danger of those Sins, represented to the Persons that are guilty of them? Are the terrible Threatnings that are denounced against those Sins laid open and set before the Sinners?

(1.) This is again further matter of Thankfulness to God, that we our selves, and ours, have been kept from these Sins, and consequently, from the Danger which they threaten, and the dreadful Evils which they expose the Sinner unto. This gives us just Occasion of our most humble and thankful Acknowledgment of God's Goodness to us therein, and of saying to our selves in the Language of the Apostle, *Who maketh thee to differ from another, and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?* 1 Cor. 4. 7.

(2.) 'Tis also of farther Use to us, for working in our Hearts a greater Hatred, Abhorrence and Detestation of those Sins. For though we hated and abhorred them before, yet to be sure we wanted some Degrees, many perhaps, of that perfect

perfect Hatred, Abhorrence and Detestation of them which we ought to labour after.

(3.) There is yet another Benefit which may accrue unto us from the Representation of the Evil and Danger of those Sins in others; That it may affect our Hearts with tender Compassion towards them: It may stir us up to pray earnestly for them, that God would be pleased to reclaim them, and to bless all Means in order to their being reclaimed.

3. Are the Troubles, the Temptations and sinful Intanglements of others discoursed of, and suitable Remedies opposed against them? This also may be beneficial to us; For,

(1.) Though we be at present free from the like Troubles, Intanglements, and Temptations, yet it offers to us matter of Thankfulness to God that we are free.

(2.) Though we be free from them at present, yet may we sometime hereafter meet with some of them. What hath befallen others in that kind, we are not absolutely, universally, and for ever secured from

(3.) Though their Troubles, sinful Intanglements and Temptations should
never

never be ours, yet, may we meet with other Christians, whose Troubles, sinful Intanglements and Temptations are the same. And if this should be, we shall have in a Readiness, that which may afford them Relief.

And thus we have seen in these few Instances, how many Ways those things may be useful and beneficial to us, which we are apt to think do only concern others, and can be of no Advantage to our selves. But yet, still, as before, if they should be of no Advantage to our selves, yet such should be our Charity to others, that we should be heartily glad that any thing is at any Time delivered or treated of that may be advantageous to any else.

Thus having spoken of the Sins of Sodom, I come now to speak of the Punishment inflicted for their Sins, An Account whereof we have in the last Words of the Text; *So I took them away as I saw good.* Which Words relate to that dreadful Destruction of that Place, by Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, whereof we read, *Gen. 19.* The Terribleness of which Judgment, in all the Circumstances thereof, I have spoken of
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before, and therefore shall not here again insist on it. The Words here pointing at that Judgment, are plain, and need no Explication: *So I took them away*; that is, when their Sins were come to that prodigious Height, when to their Pride, Luxury, Idleness, and Unmercifulness, they added, the *committing of Abomination before Me*; that is, the Sin of Uncleanness or Filthiness, and that with the highest Aggravations which that abominable Sin is capable of, *Then I took them away*; then I put an End to my Patience and Long-sufferance towards them, and cut them off. Where their Filthiness is set forth, *Gen. 19*, we have three horrid Aggravations of it.

1. The Commonness of it; the whole City generally was overspread with it: It was so Universal, that no Age, no Part of the City was free from it. When an Attempt was made to have offered Violence to *Lot's* Guests, that they might abuse them, 'tis said, *The Men of Sodom compassed the House round, both Old and Young, all the People from every Quarter*, *Gen. 19. 4*.

2. Another Aggravation of their Filthiness was, that they did not only addict themselves to Fornication and
Adul-

Adultery, but also to those Pollutions that are against Nature, *Abusing themselves with Mankind*, as the Apostle expresseth it, 1 Cor. 6. 9. This was at present, the Design of the flocking together of that wicked Rabble; They came from every Quarter of the City, to beset Lot's House, that they might abuse the Men that lodged there.

3. Another Aggravation of their Filthiness was their Impudence. So common, so universal, so reigning was this unnatural Sin among them, that they were not ashamed of it. So far were they from being ashamed of it, that they openly own it, and impudently demand the Men that were in Lot's House to be delivered to them, *That they might know them*, or unnaturally abuse them, Ver.

5. When their Wickedness came to be so monstrous, so universal, so impudent, then it was high Time, that the Justice of God should put a Stop to it by some Signal Judgment.

Hence we may observe;

Observ. 1. *That when the Sins of wicked Men are come to their full Growth, then are the Judgments of God ready to light upon them.* God is never at peace with ungodly Men; *He is angry with the Wicked*

ed every Day, Psal. 7. 11. But though he be angry with them, yet he doth not presently pour out the Vials of his Wrath upon them. He hath long Patience with them, and lets them go on in their Ways of Sin a great while, till at length they be ripe for Judgment, and then he calls them to an Account, and reckons with them once for all. *The Iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*, said God to *Abraham*, Gen. 15. 16. Their Sins were not yet come to that height unto which God would permit them to come, before he would pluck them up by the Roots, and plant the Posterity of *Abraham* in their Room. *Fill ye up the Measure of your Fathers*, said our Saviour (ironically indeed) speaking to the wicked Jews, *Matth. 23. 32*. Be as desperately wicked as your Ancestors were; Go on still in your evil Ways till ye be ripe for Destruction as they were before the Captivity. And so presently he foretels that it would be; for he adds in the next Words; *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell? Wherefore behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise Men, and Scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucifie, and some of them ye shall scourge*
in

in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City, that upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar. Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this Generation.

Thus we see when their Sins should be full, then the Judgments of God in full Measure should be poured in upon them. Now God thus waits till the Iniquities of ungodly Men be full, for divers Reasons.

1. That he may give them Time to repent, and thereby to prevent that Ruine which will otherwise come upon them.

The Goodness, Long-suffering, and Forbearance of God lead to Repentance; that's one special Design of God's forbearing to punish, and that's the Use which he expects should be made of it, *Rom.*

2. 4. The Long-suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, 1 Pet. 3. 20. And what did it wait so long for, but that Men might have Warning, and Time to turn unto God by Repentance, before the Flood should come upon them, and sweep them away?

2. God waits till Mens Iniquity be full,

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till

till their Sins be very great and highly provoking, that he may shew how slow he is to Wrath, and how unwilling to punish. *'Tis Mercy that he delighteth in Mich. 7. 18. To exercise Loving-kindness in the Earth, Jer. 9. 24. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men, Lam. 3. 33.* When he addresseth himself to punish, the Scripture speaking of him after the Manner of Men makes him to do it with much Reluctancy, and represents him as consulting with himself about it: *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My Heart is turned within me, my Repentings are kindled together, Hos. 11. 8.* This his merciful and gracious Disposition, and his Slowness to Anger, and to Acts of vindictive Justice and Severity, he declares to all the World, by forbearing to punish the worst of Men, till there seem to be a Necessity thereof; till their Sin be such as can be no longer indured; till they proceed to such an Excess of Wickedness, that his Justice and the Honour of his Holiness seem to be so much concern'd to punish, that he saith of them as of that wick-

wicked People, *Jer. 5. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this?* Till, as if all his Patience were spent, and the Riches, all the Treasures of his Long-suffering were exhausted, he at last say of them, as he did of the *Jews, Jer. 15. 6. I am weary with repenting.*

3. God waits till the Iniquity of ungodly Men be full, that he may thereby justify his Severity against them, and that all Men may be enforced to acknowledge, that his Judgments, though most terrible, are most Righteous. When wicked Men have long abused the Patience of God to the Increase of their Sins; when his Goodness that should have led them to Repentance hath still more hardened them, when, now they have proceeded to such an Excess of Wickedness, that scarce any thing can be added thereunto, they having *done as evil things as they could*, as the Prophet, or rather God by the Prophet speaks, *Jer. 35.* who can open his Mouth to plead for them? Who can take Exceptions against the Severity of God, or defame and accuse his Judgments as unjust?

Use 1. Let no impenitent Sinner be secure, though God long suffer him to go on in his Sins, and forbear to reckon

with him. Let him remember, and seriously ponder what hath been now said. God long bears with wicked Men, not because he intends never to punish them, but as waiting till their Iniquity be full, that he may at last punish them so much the more severely, and make them smart at last ~~once~~ for all their Sins that have been heaped up during the whole Time of his Patience towards them. Men still wait, and forbear to put the Sickle into the Corn till the Harvest be ripe. So doth God wait for the Ripening of the Harvest of Mens Sins; when their Iniquities are full, when they are come to their full Growth and Ripeness, then in goes the Sickle of God's Wrath to cut down the Sinner. Thus *Rev. 14. 14, 15.* The Angel cries to him that had a sharp Sickle in his Hand, that he might execute God's Wrath upon the wicked World, *Thrust in thy Sickle and reap, for the time is come for thee to reap, for the Harvest of the Earth is ripe.* Be not deceived, O ye obstinate and incorrigible Sinners, mistake not the Meaning of God's long Patience towards you. If still you go on in your Sins, be sure of it, the Sickle is in a Readiness to cut you down.

down; he only waits till the Harvest of your Sins be ripe.

Use 2. Let not any take Offence at the Providence of God, much less call in Question his Providence, because he is pleased to use so much Patience towards ungodly Men. They may long go on from one Degree of Wickedness to another, adding Drunkenness to Thirst, and yet be free from those Troubles and Afflictions which good Men frequently meet with; They may thrive and prosper in their Wickedness; They may set their Nest on high, and overlook all that are about them. But all this Patience of God towards them, is only till their Iniquities be full. When they have filled up the Measure of their Sins, then down shall they come, as high as they are; as firmly as now they seem to stand, their Foot shall slide in due time, for the Day of their Calamity is at Hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste, as God threatens, Deut. 32. 35.

This is that which David often insists on, as in divers other Places, so especially in the 37th Psalm; Fret not thyself because of evil Doers, neither be thou envious against the Workers of Iniquity: for they shall soon be cut down as the

Grass, and wither as the green Herb, Ver. 1, 2. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thy self because of him who prospereth in his Way, because of the Man who bringeth wicked Devices to pass. For evil Doers shall be cut off; yet a little while, and the Wicked shall not be, yea, thou shalt diligently consider his Place, and it shall not be, Ver. 7, 9, 10. I have seen the wicked in great Power, and spreading himself like a green Bay-Tree: yet he passed away, and lo he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found, Ver. 35, 36. So the Penman of the 73^d Psalm, after he had been much troubled in his Spirit, and under a sore Temptation arising from the Consideration of the Prosperity of Wicked Men, comparing it with the afflicted Condition of good Men, he at length recovers himself, by considering the End of those wicked Men who at present prospered so much. By Faith foreseeing what would become of them, he cries out, Surely thou didst set them in slippery Places; thou castest them down into Destruction. How are they brought into Desolation, as in a Moment! Psal. 73. 18, 19. And so much of that Observation.

Again

Again, *So I took them away*; that is, I
 ut them off in that strange Manner
 which is declared in the History of their
 destruction. Whence we may observe
 in the second Place ;

Obf. 2. *That God sometimes punisheth*
great and daring Sinners remarkably in
this Life. And his Judgments on them
 are remarkable several Ways.

(1.) In Respect of the Suddenness,
 Dreadfulness and Irresistibleness of them.
 How sudden, dreadful, and irresistible was
 this Instance of the *Punishment of the Sodo-*
mites, by Fire and Brimstone from Heaven!
 And that of *Corah, Dathan, and Abyram*,
 Num. 16. 32. taken away, and swallowed
 up alive by the Earth cleaving a-sunder
 under them! And that of *Ananias* and
Saphira, instantly falling down and giving
 up the Ghost! *Acts* 5. 5. And that of
Herod, being smitten by the Angel, and
 eaten of Worms for taking to himself
 that Glory which was due to God! *Act.*
 12. 22, 23.

(2.) In Respect of the Conformity of
 the Punishment in its manner and Cir-
 cumstances, unto the Sin. I have not
 long since, upon another Occasion, gi-
 ven divers Instances hereof: As when
 the *Sodomites*, who had burnt in unna-

tural Lusts, should be burnt by Fire and Brimstone for it; When the *Egyptians*, who had endeavoured to weaken and diminish the *Israelites*, by drowning their male Children, should be drowned in the *red* Sea themselves; When Dogs should lick the Blood of *Ahab*, at least in his Son, even in the very same Place, where he had caused Dogs to lick the Blood of innocent *Naboth*. Now the Reasons of this his Dispensation, are these.

I. To vindicate the Honour of his Justice and Holiness before the World. If all Men should be suffered still to go on in their Sins, and be as monstrously wicked and abominable as their corrupt Nature would provoke them to be, and no remarkable Punishment in this Life should be inflicted on any of them, the World would thence take Occasion to think God to be, if not an Approver of Sin, yet a great deal less displeased with it than he is, which is indeed nothing else than not to believe him to be of that infinite Justice and Holiness, which the Scriptures ascribe unto him. Wherefore to let the World know somewhat of his Justice and Holiness by Experience, and to convince Men of his perfect

fect Hatred and Abomination of Sin, he is pleased to single out some great Sinners, to make them here in this Life remarkable Instances of his Severity against Sin.

2. To make them Examples of Punishment to others, and to deter them from adventuring upon the like Provocations. So the Apostle speaking of the severe Judgments of God upon the *Israelites* for their Sins in the *Wilderness*, saith, *These things were our Examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted*, 1 Cor. 10. 6.

3. To give the World Assurance of the Judgment to come. For from such remarkable Instances of God's Severity against Sin, the Collection is easie and certain, that the same God, who hath so severely punished some great Sinners here, will undoubtedly have a Time to call all those to an Account hereafter, who escape Punishment in this World. Considering his exact Justice, and his unreconcilable and perfect Hatred of Sin, which he hath signally manifested in those remarkable Instances of his Severity against some, Reason will infer, it cannot be, that he should suffer others who are every way as bad, to go unpunished,

nished, at least, unless Satisfaction be made to his Justice by their Surety.

4. The better to set forth and manifest the Riches of his Patience towards others who are as great Offenders, whom at least in this World he spares, and suffers them to run out their whole Race in Sin, without any notable Punishment, until they come into another World. That his Severity against others greatly magnifies and commends the Riches of his Patience towards these, is evident:

For (1.) The Severity of his Judgments in those few Instances, shew what is the Heinousness and desert of the same Sins in all others.

And (2.) It thence follows, that what Severity he useth against some, the same he might justly use against all. If all escaped Punishment in this World alike, and if the Patience of God were equally extended to all, many would think themselves little beholding to God for his Patience with them: As if none should be Sick, Men would not think Health to be so great a Mercy; if none should be exercised with sore and tormenting Pains, Men would not be sensible how much they are obliged to God for Exemption from
grievous

grievous Pains, or for any tolerable Measure of Ease.

Use 1. Doth God sometimes punish great and daring Sinners remarkably in this Life? Then let great Sinners, who have hitherto escaped Punishment, humbly and thankfully acknowledge God's Forbearance towards them. They may see in the Punishment of others what they themselves have deserved, and what had long since befallen them, unless God's Patience towards them had been as Signal as hath been his Severity against others for the same Sins. What Reason was there, why God should so long bear with you rather than with them? Why had he not begun with you instead of them, and forborn them? Why had he not passed by them, and singled out you, to make you a dreadful Instance of his Severity, and *A Spectacle of his Wrath to the World, and unto Angels, and to Men*, as the Apostle speaks in another Case, 1 Cor. 4. 9? Why had he not pitcht upon you, to hang you up in Chains, as it were, to give Warning to others, and by the Terror of your Punishment, to affright and scare others from adventuring on the like presumptuous Provocations? Was there any Reason,
why

why you should be spared rather than they, besides the meer good Pleasure of God? Were not your Sins as great as theirs? Had not the Justice of God been as much glorified in your Punishment as in theirs? And might you not have served to make as fit an Instance of his Severity as they? Only God was pleased to spare you, and punish them; to make them Examples of his Severity, and you of his Patience: Oh, consider it seriously, and be deeply affected with God's Forbearance towards you. Oh, say with your self, and say it with Admiration of God's free Goodness to you; why had not I been dealt with as such and such, and such who have been fearfully cut off in the midst of their Sins, either by the Sword of the Magistrate, or by the more immediate Stroke of God's own Hand some other way? Why did not God by his Judgments upon me make me *Magor Missahid, a Terror to all that are round about me*? as he hath made others. 'Tis his Goodness and free Mercy, and nothing else, that hath put this Difference between me and them.

Use 2. Let great Sinners that have been long spared, take heed how they still persevere in their Impenitency, lest God remarkably meet with them at last.

Let

Let the Examples of God's Judgments upon others, be Warnings to them. So desperate may be the Atheism of some, that future Punishments in the World to come do not work upon them. Hell doth not terrifie them, because they hardly believe there is any such Place appointed for the Punishment of wicked Men after this Life. Well, if the Reports you have heard of Hell, be but a Fable with you, fitted only to scare Fools and Children, yet let your own Eyes beholding even here the terrible Judgments of God upon others, tell you what may also be your Portion in this World. If Hell terrifie you not, yet be afraid still to go on to provoke God, lest he make your Plagues wonderful here, and thereby at length convince you also, seeing nothing else will do it, of a sorer reckoning to be expected hereafter. If you will not at present believe that *Tophet is ordained of Old* for such as you are, *The Pile whereof is Fire and much Wood, the Breath of the Lord like a Steam of Brimstone kindling it,* as the Prophet describes it, *Isai. 30. 33.* yet the time may be hastening on you, when the Judgments of God upon you may enforce you to cry out, *Verily, there is a God*

a God that judgeth in the Earth, a Righteous God that will call Sinners to a further and more terrible Account in another World. And so much of that Observation.

So I took them away as I saw good; From those last Words, as I saw good, we may observe,

Obs. 3. *That whatsoever Severity God sheweth against Sinners, 'tis that which seemeth Good to him. And hence we may infer these two things.*

1. That all his Judgments are most wise. That which seemeth good to infinite Wisdom, how can it be otherwise? *He worketh all things according to the Counsel of his own Will, Eph. i. 11.* that is, according to that his eternal good Pleasure, which is most agreeable to the highest Wisdom, and which, to speak of God after the manner of Men, is the Result and Product of the wisest Counsels, and most mature Deliberations; not that God needs such Helps as Men do, to guide them in their Choice, but to note the perfect Conformity of his Will to the unerring Dictates of his infinite Wisdom, is he said *to work all things according to the Counsel of his own Will.*

2. We may hence infer also, that all his Judgments, how severe soever, are most

most Just and Holy. For what else could seem good to him, who is not only of infinite Wisdom, but likewise of infinite Justice and Holiness? He is not a *God that hath Pleasure in Wickedness*, Psal. 5. 4. *The just Lord will not do Iniquity*, Zeph. 3. 5. *He is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*, Psal. 145. 17. And hence we learn two things.

1. To justifie God in all his severe Providences, even where we cannot understand the Reasons of them, or give an Account of the Grounds of his Proceedings. *His Judgments are a great Deep*, Psal. 36. 6. We cannot fathom the Bottom of them: But this we know, that though they be deep and unfathomable by our Reason, yet they are most just, as *Jeremiah* acknowledged, even when he could not well satisfie himself concerning them, *Jer. 12. 1. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments.*

2. We hence learn humbly and meekly to submit to all God's Dealings. What seemeth Good to infinite Wisdom, Justice and Holiness, Why should it be displeasing unto us? Why should our Hearts rise against it? When a most severe Sentence was pronounced against *Eli* and
all

all his Family, he had nothing to reply, but what was full of Submission to and Acquiescency in the good Pleasure of God. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,* 1 Sam. 3. 18. Let the Frame of his Heart be yours, under every Dispensation of God's most wise, just and holy Providence.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Rom. vi. Ver. 23.

*The Wages of Sin is Death; but the
Gift of God is Eternal Life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

TH E R E is nothing of greater Force to take Men off from the Practice of Sin, and to prevail with them to addict themselves to an Holy and Virtuous Course of Life, than a sound Belief of those future Rewards and Punishments that await Men in another World, according to their Conversation and Déportment here. Hence it is, that those Rewards and Punishments are so often mentioned and insisted on in the Holy Scriptures. The Scripture's so often treating of and inculcating these

K things,

things, sheweth how much it concerns us both to believe them, and to be frequently minded of them. For they are not as easily believed as understood, nor as easily improved as believed. 'Tis hard to believe them, but much harder to feel the Power and Influence of our Belief of them, upon our Hearts and Lives. Wherefore, though you have often heard these things discoursed of, yet I shall not think it lost Labour to treat of them again, taking the Occasion of my present Discourse from the Portion of Scripture which I have now read, in which we have both these things laid before us.

1. The Punishment of Sin; *The Wages of Sin is Death.*

2. The Reward of Obedience and Holiness; *The Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

To begin with the First, The Punishment of Sin, in the former Clause of the Verse, *The Wages of Sin is Death.* For the better Understanding of which Words, three things are to be considered.

1. That the Apostle useth an indefinite Form of Speech, saying, *The Wages of Sin is Death.* He doth not say, The Wages of prodigious and horrid Sins, of Sins of
a more

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a more heinous Nature and deeper Dye is Death; but *The Wages of Sin is Death*, that is, of all Manner of Sin, of what Kind, Nature, or Degree soever. And this is agreeable to the Sanction or Threatning of the Law, *Deut. 27. 26. Gal. 3. 10. Cursed is he that continueth not in every thing that is written in the Book of the Law to do it.* Now Death we know is the chief and most considerable Part of that Curse, or rather is the Sum and Substance of whatever is comprehended under the Curse. And hereupon it is, that there is no Salvation for any Person without Christ, there being *No other Name given under Heaven, whereby Men must be saved, Acts 4. 11, 12.* Though the Sins of any Man have been fewer and much less heinous than the Sins of many others, yet however, without Faith in Christ, there is no possibility of being saved. *He that believeth not him, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him, John 3. 36.* He *shall be damned, Mark 16. 16.* These severe Threatnings we see are denounced against all unbelieving Sinners, without any Limitation or Exception.

2. Another thing to be considered for the better understanding of the Words,

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is,

is, That the Apostle saith, *The Wages*, or the Stipend of *Sin is Death*, making that Punishment to be due to it, and to be inflicted on the unbelieving and finally impenitent Sinner as a Debt; So that 'tis a deserved Punishment, the just Demerit of Sin. But speaking of the Reward of Obedience and Holiness, he saith, *The Gift of God is Eternal Life*; thus varying the Phrase, to shew, That though Sin doth properly deserve Death, and is inflicted on the Sinner as a due debt, and as a deserved Punishment, yet our Obedience doth not deserve Eternal Life; that is a free Gift, a Reward of Grace and not of debt. Which is yet further amplified and illustrated by what he adds, ascribing it not to the Worthiness of our Obedience, but to the Merits of Christ, that such a Reward is conferred on us. *The Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

3. It is yet further to be considered, that by Death in this Place, we are to understand both Temporal and Eternal Death, and especially, Eternal Death. And this,

1. Because this is the chief Part of the Punishment of Sin, and therefore must be chiefly intended.

2. Because

2. Because the Death here spoken of, stands in Opposition to Eternal Life. *The Wages of Sin is Death, but the Gift of God is Eternal Life.* Whence it is clear, that the Death which the Apostle opposeth to Eternal Life must be Eternal Death. To be sure, Eternal Death is principally intended, though temporal Death be not excluded.

The Words being thus explained, the Point which I am to treat of is, That *Death is the due Punishment of Sin.* Death I understand in that Latitude as it comprehends Death Temporal and Eternal. And thus is Death often threatned to the Sinner. So it was threatned against Adam, if he should break the Commandment of God by eating of the forbidden Fruit, *Gen. 2. 17. In the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;* that is, Thou shalt immediately be obnoxious and subject to Death, Thou shalt come under the Sentence of Death Temporal and Eternal. Thus the Apostle teacheth, *Rom. 5. 12. that By Sin Death entred into the World, and passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned.* This is that which the Prophet *Ezekiel* often insists on, as the Punishment which Sin unrepented of most certainly and unavoidably

bly subjects the Sinner unto. *The Soul that sinneth it shall die*, Ezek. 18. 4. *Repent and turn your selves from all your Transgressions, so Iniquity shall not be your Ruine*; that is, You shall not everlastingly perish for it, Ezek. 18. 30. *Cast away from you all your Transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new Heart, and a new Spirit*; for why will ye die, O House of Israel? Ezek. 18. 31. *I have no Pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God*: wherefore turn your selves and live ye, Ver. 32. By all these Passages we see that Death is the Punishment of Sin. To the same Purpose are those Passages in the Proverbs of Solomon. *He that sinneth against me, saith Wisdom, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father, wrongeth his own Soul: and they that hate me, love Death*, Prov. 8. 36. And he that wandreth out of the Way of Life shall remain in the Congregation of the Dead, Prov. 21. 16. And speaking of the lewd Woman he saith, *Her House is the Way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death*, Prov. 7. 27.

Now as touching Death Temporal, which consisteth in the Separation of the Soul from the Body, I shall not say much

much of this at present; I have often treated of it; and besides, my Text, as hath been said, principally intends that Death which is opposed to Eternal Life. That temporal Death is the Punishment of Sin, and a great Punishment, no Man can rationally deny; 'tis the *King of Terrours*, the Evil that Nature most abhors, *Jab* 18. 14. And well may it abhor it: For it deprives a Man of what is dearest to him, of all temporal things; It deprives a Man of Life, and together with it, of all the Comforts of Life here. Neither is this all, nor the worst that is in temporal Death; It also deprives the impenitent Sinner of all Opportunities of making his Peace with God; it deprives him of them for ever, and leaves him under an absolute Impossibility of being ever reconciled to God. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. Now must the great Work of making your Peace with God, and getting the Pardon of your Sins be dispatcht, or never. Take heed how you trifle and squander away the only time allotted you for this great Work, and make your self for ever miserable. Take heed how you delay it, and put it off from day to day, till Death

come upon you, and surprize you in a State of Impenitency. *Boast not thy self of to Morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.* You think of making your Peace with God to morrow, of repenting hereafter; but are you sure, that you shall live so long? May not Death overtake you before that time come? Or, if it please God that you be then alive, may you not be in an utter Incapacity of doing any thing for securing the Eternal Well-being of your Soul? May not some such violent Disease, or other Distemper befall you, as may render you unfit for any thing? O, do not run so desperate an Hazard! If you have any Love for your Soul, venture it not upon such Uncertainties.

And so I come to speak of Death Eternal. This is called the second Death. *He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second Death, Rev. 2. 11. Blessed and Holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection; on such the second Death hath no Power, Rev. 20. 6. Death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire, this is the second Death, Rev. 20. 14.* So again, *Rev. 21. 8.* Now if you enquire why the Condition of the damned in Hell is expressed by Death? I answer, not because the damned

damned then cease to be; for if they were not still in being, they could not still be the Subjects of that Misery which they shall then endure. To this End indeed, are the Bodies of wicked Men raised at the last Day, and reunited to their Souls, that both Soul and Body may receive the final Sentence of Condemnation, and the whole Man be adjudged to everlasting Punishments, as we may see *Matth. 25.* and *Rev. 20. 11, 12, 13, 14.* Wherefore the Damned in Hell are still alive, and shall live for ever, that they may be for ever punished. But their miserable Condition however is represented and exprest by Death, because Death being the most formidable thing to our Nature, was fittest to set forth the woful Estate of the damned. Besides, those wretched Creatures, though still alive, are yet in some Sense dead, as being void of all Spiritual Life, and of all the Comforts thereof. In this Sense the Apostle saith, that *A Widow that liveth in Pleasure*, that is, that addiceth herself to the Delights of a wanton and voluptuous Life, *is dead while she liveth*, 1 Tim. 5. 6. Now as the Joys of Heaven are such, as far exceed our present Apprehensions, we shall never fully under-

understand them till we come to be made Partakers of them ; so also are the Punishments of Hell such as cannot be fully understood till they be felt. But that they are most dreadful, the Descriptions and Representations of them, which we meet with in the Word of God, abundantly demonstrate. They are sometimes expressed by Wrath ; *The Wrath of God*, John 3. 36. *The Wrath to come*, 1 Thess. 1. 10. Matth. 3. 7. And those miserable Creatures that are to undergo those Punishments are called *Vessels of Wrath*, Rom. 9. 22. and they are said to be *appointed to Wrath*, 1 Thess. 5. 9. And *Wrath* those Punishments are called, because they are the Effects of the Wrath of an angry God. And upon the like Account, they are called *Vengeance*, Jude 7. And the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes to inflict those Punishments on impenitent Sinners, is said, to take *Vengeance on them*, 2 Thess. 1. 9. Because they are the Effects of the just Indignation of a Sin-revenging God. Add hereunto that these infernal Punishments are said to be the same that are *prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, Matth. 25. 41. And the Horror of the Place where they are to be undergone,

is set forth by *outer Darkness*, where is *weeping and Gnashing of Teeth*, Matth. 22. 13. and in divers other Places. 'Tis also called the *Place of Torment*, Luke 16. 28. 'Tis called the *Bottomless Pit*, Rev. 20. 1. And lastly, 'tis called *Tophet*, Isai. 30. 33. in Allusion to that dismal Place, where the Idolatrous, most cruel and unnatural *Israelites*, were wont to cause their own Children to *pass through the Fire to Moloch*, that is, to burn them in Sacrifice to that Idol, beating Drums while that rueful Solemnity was performed, that the doleful Screetchings of the poor Children might not be heard. Thence the Name *Tophet* was given to the Place, being derived from *Toph*, that signifies a Drum. By all this we may make some Judgment of the Grievousness of the Punishments in Hell. But this only in the General. More particularly, the Punishment of Sinners in Hell is twofold, either of Loss, or of Sense.

1. Impenitent Sinners undergo the Punishment of Loss; of the Loss of Heaven and Eternal Happiness; the Loss of unspeakable and endless Joys; of such excellent and glorious things as *neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear hath heard, nor have entred into the Heart of Man*. This Loss perhaps, Men that
give

give up themselves to a sinful Course of Life, and glut themselves with sensual Pleasures and Delights, may think to be no great Punishment ; because they neither relish nor understand those excellent things. But many wise and holy Men have been of Opinion, that the Punishment of Loss is greater than the Punishment of Sense ; that the Anguish of the Soul upon the Account of such a Loss, will afflict and wound the Damned more than all the other Torments which in Hell they endure. However it be, certainly wicked Men shall hereafter have other Thoughts of this Loss than now they have ; they shall then find it to be a most heavy and unsupportable Punishment. That the Loss of Heaven is not so inconsiderable a thing as wicked Men that love their Lusts better than their Souls may fancy it to be, our Saviour hath taught us, who saith to the unbelieving, impenitent, and obstinate Jews, That there should be *weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when they should see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of Heaven, and themselves thrust out*, Luke 13. 27, 28. So then even the Loss of Heaven shall be to the Wicked matter of bitter Lamentation,
Of

Of weeping and of gnashing of Teeth.

For then they shall better understand and consider what they have lost. Then their Eyes shall be opened to see and discern so much of the Excellency and desirableness of those glorious and eternal good things which they have despised and rejected, as shall even cut them to the Heart. But moreover there are also diverse sore Aggravations of this Loss, which shall then come in to inflame and heighten their Anguish and Vexation, and make their Resentment of it more intolerable.

As 1. That things of such superlative and transcendent Excellency had been so often set before them and proffered them, and they would not embrace them.

2. That the bare Proffers of these excellent things had not only been made them, but they had been often importuned, solicited, and earnestly perswaded to accept them; that all the most effectual Considerations, the most cogent and forcible Arguments had been made Use of to gain their Acceptance of them, and yet they would not be prevailed with.

3. That they should have been so foolish as to forego and sell away their
Portion

Portion in these excellent things, and part with Eternal Life for meer Toys and Trifles, for such are the best things which this World affords, in Comparison of Heaven and Eternal Glory.

4. That they should prefer their Sins before the eternal Well-being of their Souls; that they should prefer the Enjoyment of their base Lusts, and the dirty Pleasures of Sin for a short Season, before the Eternal Enjoyment of God and Christ, of the Company of Saints and Angels, and of all the unutterable, unconceivable Felicities of another World. That they should be so foolish as to barter away things of such an unspeakable Value at so cheap a Rate.

5. That they should fall short of Heaven, after they had gone so far in the Way thither, and made so fair a Progress towards it: After so many Convictions, so many good Purposes and Resolutions, so much partial Reformation. That they should at last be shut out of Heaven after they were come so near it, after they had done so much towards attaining it, that it might be said of them as our Saviour saith of the Scribe in the Gospel, that they were *not far from the Kingdom of God.*

6. That

6. That they should lose Heaven, when so many of their Friends and Relations, of their Neighbourhood and Acquaintance attained it; and many, who never had the Means which God afforded them.

7. That they should lose Heaven irrecoverably; that they should lose it once for ever; that now the joint Intercessions of Angels and Men, if they should all concur to mediate for them, could not put them again into a Possibility of Salvation, nor prevail for obtaining one Hour to be allotted them for endeavouring to make their Peace with God. When all these things shall come fresh into their Minds, when they shall come in upon their Spirits with Quickness, Strength, and Vigour, when they shall be fully apprehensive of them, and when the Thoughts of them shall rest, and abide upon their Souls Day and Night, how deeply will they pierce and wound the Soul, and make them ready to gnaw their own Flesh, and tear themselves in Pieces, if they could! Consider this all ye impenitent and obstinate Sinners, that despise the Offers of Mercy, and still go on in your Trespases; that think 'tis nothing to fall short of Heaven,

ven, and value not the Loss of it so you may for the present enjoy the Pleasures of Sin. Will you still be so hardy, as to venture on from Day to Day in a Course of Sin, though you thereby procure to your Souls in the End, such intolerable Regret and direful Anguish, as the Thoughts of the Loss of Heaven will certainly create unto you? If notwithstanding all this, and whatsoever can be said, you be still so madly in Love with Sin, that enjoy it you will whatever may come of it, you will not part with it whatsoever it cost you; then know, That *in the day of Judgment, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Turks, Pagans and Infidels, than for you.* And there is all Reason for it that it should so be: For the Means of the Knowledge of Christ were never afforded them, the Offers of Mercy which you have enjoyed and despised, were never made them.

2. From the Punishment of Loss, I now come to speak of the Punishment of Sense, as 'tis usually called. This kind of Punishment lies in those positive Torments, that are inflicted on the damned for their Sins over and above what they suffer in the Loss of Heaven. This Punishment

nishment of Sense is variously described and set forth unto us in the Holy Scriptures. Tophet is ordained of Old, yea, for the King it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, the Breath of the Lord like a Stream of Brimstone doth kindle it, *Isai. 30. 33.* Christ shall come with his Fan in his Hand, and he shall thoroughly purge his Floor, and gather the Wheat into the Garner, but he will burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire. *Matth. 3. 12.* If thy Hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into Life maimed, than having two Hands to go into Hell, into the Fire that never shall be quenched: where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched, *Mark 9. 43, 44.* out of *Isai. 66. 24.* Then shall he say to them on his left Hand, Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, *Matth. 25. 41.* The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, *2 Thess. 1. 7, 8, 9.*

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The Rich Man in Hell lift up his Eyes, being in Torments, and seeth Abraham a far off, and Lazarus in his Bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have Mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the Tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue, for I am tormented in this Flame. And Abraham said, Son, Remember, that thou in thy Life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented, Luke 16. 24, 25. If any Man worship the Beast, and his Image, and receive his Mark in his Forehead or in his Hand, the same shall drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God, which is poured out without Mixture into the Cup of his Indignation, and he shall be tormented with Fire and Brimstone in the Presence of the Holy Angels, and in Presence of the Lamb. And the Smoak of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no Rest Day nor Night who worship the Beast and his Image, and who-soever receiveth the Mark of his Name, Rev. 14. 9, 10, 11. I saw the Dead small and great stand before God, and the Books were opened, and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the Dead were judged out of those things which were writ.

written in the Books, according to their Works. And the Sea gave up the Dead which were in it, and Death and Hell delivered up the Dead which were in them, and they were judged every Man according to their Works. And Death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire, this is the second Death. And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the Lake of Fire, Rev. 20. 12, 13, 14, 15. The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and Murtherers, and Whoremongers, and Sorcerers, and Idolaters, and all Liars, shall have their Part in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death, Rev. 21. 8.

These are the chief of those Scriptures, in which the woful Condition of the Damned, in Respect of the Punishment of Sense, is set forth and represented, to us.

In which Scriptures, we have the Extremity, the uninterrupted Continuance, and the Eternity of those Punishments laid before us.

I. The Extremity of them. Fire is the most terrible thing in Nature: And by this terrible Element, are the Damned said to be punished. Yea, with Fire in the most fierce and raging Materials,

with Fire and Brimstone; and this Fire blown up and heightned to the greatest Fierceness; *The Breath of the Lord, as a Stream of Brimstone, doth kindle and heighten it.* And 'tis said to be a *Lake of Fire and Brimstone*, into which the damned are thrown. In this Lake of Fire and Brimstone they wallow; with the Flames of it they are encompassed, in them they are bedded, and as it were wrapped up and enfolded. Than these Representations what higher could there be to set forth the Extremity of those Torments?

2. We have in these Scriptures, the Constancy and uninterrupted Continuance of these Torments without Cessation or Intermision, without Mitigation or Abatement. The damned have *No Rest Day nor Night; they drink of the Wine of the Wrath of God that is poured out without Mixture*, without any such Mixture as might in the least allay or qualifie it. The rich Man in Torments is not allowed the small Refreshing which the Tip of a Finger dipt in Water might afford his scorched Tongue.

3. We have the Eternity of their Punishments. *Their Worm never dieth: The Fire never goeth out, 'tis unquenchable Fire,*

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'tis *everlasting Fire*, 'tis *the Vengeance of eternal Fire* which they lie under, 'tis *everlasting Destruction* which they are punished with, *The Smoak of their Burning ascendeth up for ever and ever*. By all these Expressions is the endless duration of their Sufferings described in the fore-mentioned Scriptures. And this last particular, that their Punishments shall be endless, puts the most direful Sting into their Torments. *Francis Spira*, the Horrors of whose wounded Conscience for renouncing the Truth which he had embraced, are well known, would have thought it some Allay to his Sufferings, some Relief to his distressed Soul, if the Torments of Hell had been limited to the Space of twenty thousand Years; but to think that there would never, never be an End of them, this was that which was worse to him than the Tortures of all the Racks in the World.

If here you ask, how it can stand with the Justice of God thus to punish Sin, to inflict everlasting Punishments for temporal Offences, and that *they* should suffer for ever who sinned but for a while, for a short time in comparison of Eternity?

To this I answer,

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1. That

1. That infinite Punishments are due to the Sinner for Offences committed against the infinite Majesty of God: And seeing the Creature, being finite, cannot bear an infinite Weight of Punishment at once, it was requisite that the Punishments that could not be infinite in Weight, should be infinite in duration; that is, that there should be no End of them, but that they should be still continued, and drawn out to Eternity.

2. The Law which by Man's Sin is broken, is *Holy, Just and Good*, Rom. 7. 12. and it was given us for our Good, *Deut.* 4. 40. our Benefit and Happiness was intended and designed therein.

3. Our Obedience thereunto is enforced by terrible Threatnings, and encouraged by excellent Promises, both which greatly aggravate our Sins, when neither Threatnings nor Promises will prevail with us to make us obedient; when break the Law we will, though we thereby affront the Authority and despise the Goodness of the Law-giver, the Supreme Governour of the World.

4. We know not how much of the Punishments of Hell may be voluntary to the Sinner. Wicked Men here in this World, vex and disquiet, punish and torment

ment themselves by their violent and ungovernable Passions, by their Envy and Malignity of Spirit, by the Fermentings of their corrupt Affections within them, by the Boylings up of Malice and Revenge in their Hearts. And much after the same Manner, but in an higher degree, may the damned in Hell be their own Tormentors for ought that we know, while their Hearts are brimful of Envy at the Felicity of the Blessed Angels and Saints, and as full of Hatred and Malignity against God himself, whom they curse and blaspheme with their Tongues, and if they were able, would pull him out of Heaven with their Hands, to be revenged on him for adjudging them to that Place of Torment. I say, we know not how much of their Punishment may be voluntary, they being their own Tormentors.

5. If they still go on to sin at this rate, why may not their Torments be still continued? If there be no End of their sinning, nor ever will be, What Injustice is it, if there be no End of their Punishments?

6. But after all that hath been said, if any of us should still be apt to judge it

hard, that impenitent Sinners should be everlastingly punished, it must further be considered, that we are not competent Judges in this matter, as being full of Self-love and Partiality to our selves in a Business that concerns our selves: Again, that we are blind, ignorant and shallow Creatures, that cannot fathom the depth of God's unsearchable Judgments. Alas, we understand very little even in the things of Nature; much less do we understand in the deep things of God. The greatest Naturalist, the most profound Philosopher in the World, is frequently puzzled, and at a Loss in these natural things. After all his industrious Enquiry and most accurate Search into the Secrets of Nature, there is not the most contemptible Fly that moves in the Air, or Worm that crawls upon the Ground, or the smallest dust in the whole Ball of the Earth, but hath those Mysteries and Secrets of Nature in it, of which all this Man's great Learning is not able to give a satisfactory Account. Who are we then, that we should think our selves sufficiently capacitated and qualified to judge of the deep Counsels and profound Judgments of God? But however there are two things which, well weighed,

weighed, may fully answer, and for ever silence all our Objections and Reasonings against the Justice of God's Proceedings in laying this Punishment upon finally impenitent Sinners.

1. 'Tis undeniably clear from Scripture, that God hath ordained everlasting Torments to be the Punishment of Sin. This no Man can deny, that will not absolutely gainsay the Authority of Scripture.

2. Whatsoever God ordains and constitutes, must needs be Just and Righteous, because it is done by him whose Will is the Rule of all Righteousness, and who can no more be the Author of any unjust Action or Constitution, than he can cease to be God. Let us not therefore take Offence, or stumble at the righteous Judgments of God. Though we may not perhaps, at present, apprehend the Equity of all his Constitutions and judiciary Proceedings, yet the time is coming, when the Righteousness of them shall shine forth to all the World, and be as clear as the Light; when both Angels and Men shall see and acknowledge it, saying, as the Church doth upon Occasion of the Judgments inflicted on *Babylon*, Rev. 19. 1, 2. *Salvation, and Glory,*

Glory and Honour, and Power unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his Judgments. Now I come to make Application of what hath been said. And here,

1. This overthrowes the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*, concerning venial Sins. They hold that some Sins do not deserve everlasting Punishments, and that God may not justly inflict any other than temporal Punishments for them. And these they call venial Sins, in Opposition to mortal Sins; that is, to Sins of a more heinous Nature, which alone, as they say, are punishable with Death Eternal. But *If the Wages of Sin*, of all Sin without Exception, *be Death*, Death Temporal and Eternal; and if the Threatnings denounced against all Transgressours of the Law be Death, and *Every Man be cursed, that continueth not in every thing that is written in the Book of the Law*; and if there be no Pardon of any Sin to be obtained without Christ; what Place is there left for venial Sins? We grant indeed, that all Sins being not alike heinous, shall not be alike punished in Hell; as there are different degrees of Sin, so there are also different Measures and degrees of Punishment in that Place of Torment.

ment. Our Saviour hath informed us, that they who sin against greater Means, shall be more severely punished. *It shall be more tolerable, saith he, for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of Judgment, than for Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, Matth. 11. 21, 22, 23, 24. The Servant that knew his Master's Will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes; but he that knew it not, and did things worthy of Stripes, shall be beaten with fewer Stripes, Luke 12. 47, 48.* But notwithstanding this difference in the degrees of Punishments, according to the different Measures and degrees of Mens Sins, all impenitent Sinners shall be adjudged to Hell, and everlasting Torments; that's the common Sentence to be pronounced against them all. And as little Ground is there in Scripture for their doctrine concerning Purgatory, as for their distinction of Sins into mortal and venial. As the Holy Scriptures make all Sins to be mortal, that is, to be such as in their own Nature deserve Eternal Death, and as shall certainly be so punished, unless through the Mercy of God and the Satisfaction of Christ, the Pardon of them be obtained; so the same holy Scriptures make all Punishments

nishments after this Life to be everlasting. As for that Fiction of purgatory Flames, out of which the Souls of Men, after some Years, may by the Prayers and good Works of others be released, there are not the least Footsteps thereof in the Word of God. A meer Cheat, if not at first devised, yet to be sure kept up and maintained to pick Mens Purses, and to bring in Grist to the Pope's Mill; For what will not dying Men, thus deluded, give to purchase Masses, Prayers, Indulgencies and Pardons, by which their Torments in Purgatory may be abated, or their Release out of them hastened? And what will not their surviving Friends and dear Relations be willing to part with, to relieve them, being given up to strong delusions, to believe that Money may purchase Favour for them either in the lessening and moderating, or in the shortning of their Torments? But to say no more of these Cheats and Impostures which Men of seared Consciences have, under the Pretence of Religion, deluded poor Souls with; Let us be truly thankful, that God hath been graciously pleased to rescue us from under the Power of such delusions. And to the End, that the *Egyptian* Darkness which our Fore-
Fathers

Fathers were encompassed and surrounded with, may never overspread this Land again: Let us walk answerably to the Light which we do at present enjoy, and let us take heed, that by our Unthankfulness and other Sins against the Gospel, we provoke not God to deprive us of it.

2. What hath been spoken concerning the Punishment of Sin in Hell, concerning the Extremity and Eternity of those Torments which impenitent Sinners must there undergo, may inform us of the heinous Nature of Sin. We are wont to make light of Sin, especially of some Sins; we are apt to think there is no great Evil in them. But whatever our Thoughts of Sin are, certainly God, who cannot be deceived, hath other Thoughts of it. If he had judged Sin to be so light a matter as we do, he would never have ordained Fire and Brimstone, Fire unquenchable, everlasting Fire, to be the Punishment thereof. 'Tis the most wise and the most righteous God that hath so judged of it, and that hath so determined and stated the Punishment of it; and therefore there must be a great deal more Evil therein than we can apprehend. Wherefore let us subscribe to
his

his unerring Sentence concerning it, to his infallible Judgment of it, and let us not think, that the righteous Judge of the World, would appoint and constitute everlasting Torments in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone to be the Punishment of such a small matter, of such a Trifle as we make Sin to be.

3. This may also inform us of the high displeasure of God against Sin, and his perfect Hatred of it. What greater Demonstration can there be of his immortal Hatred of it, than the dreadful-ness and Eternity of those Torments which he inflicteth on the impenitent Sinner for it? If his severe Judgments inflicted on Sinners in this World be an Argument of his high displeasure against Sin, and his extreme Hatred of it, how much more are those incomparably greater and more terrible Judgments with which he everlastingly pursues it in another World!

4. It informs us of the unspeakable Love and Mercy of God to us in the Pardon of our Sins. 'Tis wonderful Goodness and astonishing Mercy, that he who hates Sin with such a perfect Hatred, as for it to subject the impenitent Sinner to everlasting Torments, should
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yet be pleased to remit and pardon it to all truly humbled and sincerely penitent Sinners. That he who hates Sin with such an irreconcilable and everlasting Hatred, should yet vouchsafe to be perfectly reconciled to the repenting Sinner, and to take him into Favour, and treat him as kindly as if he had never offended. This is not after the manner of earthly Princes, who, though they may sometimes pardon Rebels and Traytors, yet are not wont to make them their Favorites. They think it much to take off the Punishment which they have deserved; So far are they from signaling them with special Marks of their Favour. But thus doth God universally and eminently to all whom he pardons. He makes them his Children, and dignifies them with all the Privileges of his Children. He bestows *Grace and Glory on them, and no good thing doth he withhold from them.* He advanceth them to the Honour of being *Heirs of the Kingdom that he hath promised to them that love him.* O admirable Loving-kindness, that he who hates Sin with a perfect Hatred, and purses it with the Effects of his Hatred of it to Eternity, should be so Merciful and Gracious, so kind

Kind and Bountiful to the penitent Sinner, the very Thoughts and Remembrance of whose former Provocations might be enough to estrange his Heart for ever from him!

5. It informs us of the high Esteem we ought to have of Christ, who came into the World to *Save us from our Sins*, Matth. 1. 21. *To deliver us from the Wrath to come*, 1 Thess. 1. 10. *To be a Propitiation for our Sins*, 1 Joh. 4. 10. by his Death to satisfy the Justice of God, and make *Reconciliation for Iniquity*, Dan. 9. 24. *That he might destroy him who had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil, and deliver them who through the Fear of Death were all their Life time subject unto Bondage*, Heb. 2. 14, 15. *Who hath redeemed us by his Blood out of every Kindred and Tongue, and People and Nation*, Rev. 5. 9. He alone rescueth us from Hell, and from those everlasting Burnings which are prepared for impenitent Sinners; *There is no Salvation in any other but Christ: Neither is there any other Name under Heaven given among Men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts 4. 12. How highly therefore should we prize him, accounting all things loss and dung for the Excellency of the Knowledge of him!

Now

How dearly and intirely should we love him, who hath given such demonstration of his unspeakable Love to us! To raise our Esteem of him, and inflame our Love to him, Let us by our most serious Thoughts and Meditations, often look into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and take a View of those Everlasting Burnings, which without Christ must have been our Portion for ever. If we really believe this, how is it that we value him no more, that we have no more Love for him?

6. If Eternal Death be the Wages of Sin, this may inform us how highly we are concerned to seek for the Pardon of our Sins, and to set about it immediately. A Man that knows he hath swallowed a Cup of strong Poyson, will presently betake him to some soveraign Antidote, for if he doth not, he makes sure Account, that he is a dead Man. Sin is a most deadly Poyson; a Poyson of so rank a Malignity, that without a Pardon obtained, it doth not only threaten Eternal Death to the Sinner, but inevitably bring it upon him; that is to say, all those most dreadful and everlasting Punishments in another World which the Scripture comprehends under the second

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Death. Now, do you believe this? Are you verily perswaded, that Sin unrepented of and unpardon'd, will certainly make you unspeakably and Eternally miserable? Do you make sure Account, that unless you make your Peace with God before you go hence, you must *dwell with devouring Fire, and Everlasting Burnings*? How then can you be at rest until this great Work be done? How strange and prodigious is your carnal Security, or rather your Stupidity and Spiritual Lethargy, if notwithstanding all this, you sit still as one unconcern'd, and use no Endeavours to *flee from the Wrath to come*, against which, while you continue and persevere in your Impenitency, you have not as much as an Hour's Security? Are you every day and every hour in danger of dropping into the *unquenchable Flames of the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*? And do you dally, and sport, and play, and trifle away your precious time, as if your inward Thoughts were, that there are neither Rewards nor Punishments, that there is neither Heaven nor Hell after this Life, and that all the Reports the Scriptures make of the unutterable and endless Torments of damned Creatures, deserve no more Credit

Credit than *Æsop's* Fables or popish Legends? O do not, do not still go on to neglect the great Salvation that is offered you in the Gospel, lest God give you the Spirit of Slumber, lest he let you alone to sleep on in your Sins till you fall into the bottomless Pit, and the Flames of Hell awaken you.

If you think that these things are represented in a more frightful manner than was requisite; and that to terrifie Men with such formidable things, is not to preach the Gospel to them, that they may believe and be saved, but the ready Way to drive them to despair, that they may be damned: To this I answer,

1. That they who make such Objections, are in all Probability such as are not willing to be rouzed up and awakened out of that deadly Slumber that hath seized on them, and even bound up their Spiritual Senses. They are such as in all Likelihood are asleep in their Sins, and having a Mind to sleep on, they cannot endure to be disturbed. He is, if not an Enemy, yet one that troubles and disquiets them causelessly and indiscreetly, that endeavours to make them sensible of their Condition. Even they to whom no Peace belongs, love to hear Men cry,

Peace, Peace, and nothing is more acceptable to them than to be flattered into a good Opinion of themselves, though it be to their Eternal Ruine and Destruction. 'Tis a very ill Sign when People cannot endure to hear the danger of Sin, the Threatnings of the Law, the Terrors of the Lord, and the Torments of Hell set before them, and laid open to them. It's a shrewd Symptom of an unsound Condition; and therefore it highly concerns all such to suspect themselves, to make diligent Search into themselves, and to enquire narrowly and impartially into their Spiritual Estate, that they be not deceived. To be deceived in what concerns our Souls is both most easie, and most dangerous. 'Tis most easie, because we are by Nature very willing to be deceived, and very unwilling to be undeceived. Our false Notions and fond Dreams of the Safety, Soundness, and Happiness of our bad Condition, are sweet and pleasant to us, and we hate to be delivered from them. Besides all this, Satan, the great Enemy of Souls, is most subtil and industrious in helping forward this our Self-delusion. How bad and dangerous soever our present Condition may be, we shall be sure of all the mischiefous

chievous Assistance which he is able to afford us, to make us fancy and believe 'tis Good. Nor is this kind of Deceit more easie than 'tis dangerous. To be fondly and foolishly perswaded, that our Spiritual Condition is very good, when 'tis extremely bad; that we are in the State of Grace when we are in a State of Wrath; that we are such as have an Interest in Christ and all his Benefits, when we are in the *Gall of Bitterness and in the Bond of Iniquity*; This is the high Way to Destruction. For he that is held under the Power of this Delusion, knowing not his danger, cannot attempt or endeavour to get out of it, but runs on confidently, fearlessly and foolhardily upon his own Destruction. He goes down smoothly and quietly without Trouble or Regret to the Chambers of Death, and understands not whither he is going till he come within the Regions of Darkness, and the Confines of the Bottomless Pit.

2. Whereas you think the miserable Estate of the damned in Hell is represented more frightfully than was requisite; take heed lest going on in your Sins impatiently, you find the *Torments* of Hell more dreadful and intolerable than any thing

that hath been said concerning them. 'Tis the concurrent Judgment of learned Men, that no Tongue of Man, no Language can represent and set forth those Torments to the full; and that those sinful Creatures that shall be so miserable, as for their Sins to be adjudged to Hell, shall find the Punishments to be there undergone, far to exceed all that ever they heard touching the Severity and dreadfulness of them. Be not deceived; how favourable and gentle soever you may be willing to fancy the Flames of Hell to be, you will feel them to be most intolerable if you be so unhappy as to have Experience of them, and then you will acknowledge that to be a real Truth which now you make light of, That *'tis a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.*

3. Whereas the Representation of the Extremity and Eternity of the Torments of Hell is conceived to be unsuitable to the Gospel-Ministry, that should publish the glad Tidings of Salvation by Christ; I answer,

(1.) That certainly Christ and his Apostles published the Gospel in a right manner; and yet we find that they in their Preaching, insisted much upon these

these things. Where do we meet with more frequent mention of the terrible Coming of Christ to judge the World, of the dreadful Sentence that shall then be pronounced against all impenitent Sinners, of the unconceivable and endless Torments of the damned in Hell, than in their Preaching? Are not these matters much more fully and largely treated of, and much more terribly set forth in the New Testament by Christ and his Apostles, the Publishers of the Gospel of Peace, than ever they were by the Prophets in the old Testament? Why therefore should any Man think that the Representation and laying open of these things is not agreeable to the Gospel-Ministry?

(2.) The treating of these terrible things is so far from being unsuitable to the Preaching of the Gospel, and the Publishing of the joyful Tidings of Salvation by Christ, that it very much promotes and furthers the Design of the Gospel, which is to take Men off from their Sins, to bring them to Christ, and to make them willing to receive him according to the Terms of the Gospel. Wicked Men are so in Love with their Sins, that they will not be prevailed with to leave

them, unless the extream Danger and dreadful Consequents of their Perseverance in them be laid before them, and frequently inculcated and pressed upon them. Though Christ with all those inestimable Benefits which he brings along with him, be offered to them, yet will they never be perswaded to receive him until they come to be sensible of their extream need of him, which they will never be, unless they be thoroughly apprehensive of the Wrath to come, and that Eternal Misery which without Christ must be their Portion for ever.

4. Whereas 'tis further objected, that the Sounding of the dreadful Noise of the Torments of Hell, and of the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone, in Mens Ears upon all Occasions, is the Way to drive them to despair; I answer, that if these things were only insisted on, and no Discovery made of any way to be delivered from them, no Door of Hope were opened, that Sinners might find Mercy with God, this would drive them to despair, and leave them under it: But when together with the Representation of the terrible Punishments to be hereafter everlastingly inflicted on all finally unbelieving and impenitent Sinners, the
Remedy

Remedy which God, out of his infinite Mercy, hath provided, is held forth, when Christ is made known to them through whom they may be delivered from the Wrath to come, when he is offered them, and the Terms on which they may be made Partakers of him are discovered, and those Terms shewed to be most reasonable and equitable; and when even the greatest of Sinners are called upon to flee from the Wrath to come, are by all manner of Inducements, by the most forcible Arguments perswaded, entreated, and earnestly importuned to come unto Christ that they may have Life; Is this the Way to drive them to despair? Is it not the Way to keep them from that everlasting Despair which Presumption, unless Men be delivered from it in Season, will certainly end in? To conclude, this being the Design of all Discourses of the Torments of Hell, that are prudently and charitably managed; let none be unwilling to hear those terrible things, that they may never feel them.

7. If Eternal Death be the Wages of Sin, we are hence informed how much it concerns us to hate Sin, and to shun and avoid it our selves, and likewise to do
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our utmost to hinder it, and stop the Course of it in others.

1. It highly concerns us to hate it, and to shun and avoid it our selves. And this upon a double Account; namely, because it is so odious and hateful to God, and so dangerous and destructive to our selves.

(1.) Because it is so odious to God, and so highly displeasing to him, it being that which he most severely and everlastingly punisheth; that which he pursues with the dreadful Effects of his fierce Wrath and Indignation to Eternity. Now, should not we hate that which he so perfectly, so irreconcilably, and eternally hates? And so also should we not, upon the same Consideration, carefully decline it and run away from it? Should we not deliberately choose to undergo any other Evil in the World, rather than willingly and wilfully contract to our selves the Guilt of Sin, rather than pollute and defile our selves with that which is so hateful to God, and would render us so loathsome and abominable in his pure Eyes? Make more particular Application of this to your own particular Sins, the Sins which you find your self most addicted unto, and which

which you have been and are most frequently overtaken with ; and if you do not find it to be of some Force to restrain you, and to keep you within the Bounds of your Duty ; if you do not find, that when you are in Danger of running into those Sins, it curbs you and holds you in ; you must conclude, that either you do not believe that God hates Sin so perfectly as the Terribleness and the Eternity of the Punishments which he inflicteth on the Sinner for it, argue he doth ; or, that you have but little Love for him. For if you really believed, that he bears such an immortal Hatred against Sin, and did withal truly love him, would you ever allow your self to do that *abominable thing which he hates* ? as he himself speaks, Jer. 44. 4.

(2.) It highly concerns us carefully to avoid and run away from Sin, because it is so dangerous and destructive to us. Without the infinite Mercy of God in Christ, it will certainly make you eternally miserable, the Objects of God's fierce Wrath and fiery Indignation for ever, even as long as God himself hath a Being, and as long as there is Power enough in his Almighty Arm to punish you.

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2. The same Consideration should also make us use our best Endeavours to hinder Sin, and to stop the Course of it in others. And this should be done by good Counsel, by Admonition, and Reproof where need is; as also by restraining and punishing it as far as we are entrusted with Power to do it. Unless we use our best Endeavours to hinder Sin in others, that is so highly displeasing to God, and so pernicious and destructive to the Sinner, we shew that we have neither Love to God, nor to Man; and that we are alike regardless of God's Honour, and of our Brother's Good. Besides, Sin being so highly displeasing unto God, doth not only render the impenitent Sinner eternally miserable in another World, but draws down the heavy Judgments of God upon Men in this World, and this not only upon the particular Persons offending, but upon the Places where they live. So then, if we have any Love for the Land of our Nativity, and for the Places of our Abode, it concerns us to prevent and hinder Sin in others as much as we can.

8. If Eternal Death be the Punishment of Sin, if without Repentance it doth inevitably bring upon the Sinner
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those everlasting Torments in another World, the Misery whereof no Tongue can exprels; This may inform us of the horrible Wickedness of all those who corrupt and pervert others, who tempt and seduce others into the Ways of Sin or any pernicious Error; as much as in them lies, they bring upon them Eternal Destruction both of Soul and Body, expose them to the fierce Wrath of God, and make them for ever miserable. It also informs us how dangerous the Company and Society of such wicked Instruments is: 'Tis certainly much safer to keep Company with such as have the Plague-sore running upon them, than to converse familiarly and frequently with such Persons as make it their Business to debauch or seduce those with whom they converse. For your conversing with the one, brings you in Danger of Temporal Death; but your Familiarity with the other, brings you in Danger of Death Eternal; The one threatens the Body only, with Temporal Dissolution; the other, threatens both Soul and Body with Everlasting Destruction.

SERMON

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THE FOURTH

CHAPTER. I. OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE SUBJECT. II. OF THE

POWER OF THE PARLIAMENT. III. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE COMMONS. IV. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE PEERAGE. V. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE CLERGY. VI. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE JUDICIARY. VII. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE MILITARY. VIII. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE NAVY. IX. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE MARINE. X. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE AIR. XI. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE LAND. XII. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE SEA. XIII. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE AIR. XIV. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE LAND. XV. OF THE

RIGHTS OF THE SEA. XVI. OF THE

SERMON V.

Rom. vi. Ver. 23.

*The Wages of Sin is Death ; but the
Gift of God is Eternal Life
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

AND so from the Punishment of Sin in the former Clause of the Verse, I go on to speak of the Reward of Obedience, in the latter Clause thereof. *But the Gift of God is Eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* In which Words we have these three things considerable.

1. That Eternal Life is the Reward of Obedience.

2. That this Reward is the Gift, the free Gift of God.

3. That

3. That 'tis upon Christ's Account, and for his Sake, that this Reward is bestowed. Of these in order as I have mentioned them.

1. The Reward of Obedience is Eternal Life. Under those two Words, *Eternal Life*, is comprehended all that Blessedness and Felicity which God hath promised to make his People Partakers of in the World to come; Heaven, and all the Happiness and unutterable Enjoyments thereof. There is indeed nothing by which our future Happiness is more frequently expressed, than Eternal Life, or Everlasting Life. This is the ordinary Language by which the Holy Scriptures set it forth. So is it three Times expressed in the third of St. John, *As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the Wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal Life, John 3. 14, 15. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life, John 3. 16. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life, John 3. 36.* And so, above ten Times more is it expressed in other Places of that Gospel, by the same Evangelist.

gelist. So then 'tis Life, and 'tis Eternal Life, by which our future Happiness is represented to us.

I. 'Tis Life, in Opposition to Death, by which the Misery of the Damned is exprest. Now Life is the chief of all Blessings. Nothing in this World is more desirable than Life. When Men are in Danger, What will they not part with to save their Lives? So dear is Life to a Man, that he sticks not to purchase it at any Rate. And yet when Men have at an high Rate purchased Life, and rescued themselves from Death at present, they have no Security for the future, Life is still uncertain. And while Life is continued, Men for the most part, have little Enjoyment of it, in Respect of the many Afflictions and Troubles with which it is attended, the many Sorrows and Sufferings with which it is imbittered. But yet, however, amid all these Hardships and Inconveniencies, amid all these Allays and Abatements of the Comforts of Life, Men are willing to live still. Most Men rather choose to live a sickly and a crazy Life, a painful and vexatious Life, an afflicted and disconsolate Life, than to die; so dear is Life unto them under
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any Circumstances almost, excepting those of the most direful and intolerable Rackings and Tortures. And yet, what is this Life in the best and most desirable Circumstances, but a kind of Death, if it be compared with the Life to come? That Life which we shall be made Partakers of in Heaven, if we can get thither, is Life indeed, such a Life as in Comparison whereof our Life here deserves not the Name of Life. One Hours Enjoyment of that Life will be much better to us than if we could live here in this World a thousand Years twice told, and we were all that while compassed about and environed with all the best and most desirable things which this inferior World can furnish us with. But to speak a little more particularly concerning the singular Advantages and glorious Prerogatives of the Life to come.

(I.) 'Tis a Life of Sight and Enjoyment. In this World we live a Life of Faith, whereby we rest assured, that we shall in due Time hereafter be actually possessed of all those unseen good things which Christ hath purchased, and God hath prepared for them that love him; and a Life of Hope, whereby we patiently wait for them. But in Heaven, we shall

shall see, be really possessed of, and actually enjoy all those excellent and glorious things which are now only at a great Distance the Objects of our Faith and Hope. This is that which the Apostle hath taught us, *2 Cor. 5. 7. Heb. 11. 1.*

(2.) 'Tis a Life of perfect Freedom and Exemption from all those Evils in every kind which do either afflict us and make us in some Degree miserable, or deprive us of much of the Comfort of Life here. And such are, with Relation to the Soul more especially, Sense of Divine Wrath, Horror of Conscience, Troubles of Mind; or, if it be not so bad with us, yet at certain Seasons Dissatisfaction about our Spiritual Estate, Doubtings of God's Favour, and many solicitous Fears and Jealousies about our everlasting Condition arising from the Darkness of our Minds and the Unbelief of our Hearts. And with Relation to our Bodies, we shall be freed from all those Infirmities, Pains, and Diseases, which render our Lives uncomfortable; as likewise from all those outward Disasters and Afflictions which we meet with in this World. In a Word, we shall be perfectly freed from Sin, and all those Evils that are the Consequents thereof.

All Tears shall then be wiped away from our Eyes, Rev. 21. 4. There shall then be neither weeping, nor Cause of weeping in any kind, or upon any Account whatsoever.

(3.) 'Tis a Life of compleat and full Enjoyment of all those good things that may any way conduce to our Happiness. Perfection of Grace and Holiness, Perfection of Knowledge, Perfection of Spiritual Peace and Joy, unspeakable Consolations and Rivers of Pleasure continually flowing into the Soul from the immediate, constant and uninterrupted Vision and Fruition of God, the Fountain of Life: Add hereunto all those Perfections and Endowments of the Body which may contribute any thing to our Comfort and Happiness; such as are perfect Health, Strength, Beauty, Agility, Vigour, Activity, and whatever else in that kind can be named, that may be looked upon as a suitable Perfection thereof. Such is the Life to come which we hope to enjoy, and live in Expectation of. And O how should we long to be it actual Possession of it! How earnestly should we groan to put off this our earthly Tabernacle, that being clothed upon with our House from Heaven, Mortality might
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be swallowed up of Life, as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 5. 4. How should we groan to be delivered from the Bondage of Corruption, and translated into the Glorious Liberty of the Children of God, as again the same Apostle speaks, Rom. 8. 18, 19, 20, 21. And as for the Troubles and Incumbrances of this our uneasie and irksome Life here, With how much Patience, Quiet, Tranquility, Calmness, and Serenity of Spirit, should we bear them all, while we are assured of such an happy and blessed Life hereafter, as no Tongue can express the Prerogatives and Felicities thereof.

But 2. 'Tis not only Life, a Life of transcendent Bliss and Happiness, that is to be the Reward of our Obedience; 'tis Eternal Life; a Life that shall never have an End. There is nothing in the New Testament more frequently and more expressly affirmed than this is. Seldom is there any Mention made of our future Happiness, but the endless Duration thereof is some way or other set forth and signified. Not to mention the Passages before recited; Every one that hath forsaken Houses, or Brethren, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Names Sake, shall receive an

hundred fold, and shall inherit Everlasting Life, Matth. 19. 29. These, that is the Wicked, shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal, Matth. 25. 46. Whosoever drinketh of the Water that I shall give him, that is, Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall never thirst, but the Water that I shall give him shall be in him a Well of Water springing up unto Everlasting Life, John 4. 14. He that reapeth receiveth Wages, and gathereth Fruit unto Life Eternal, that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together, John 4. 36. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting Life, John 5. 24. Whoso eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, hath Eternal Life, John 6. 54. My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them Eternal Life, John 10. 27, 28. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlasting Life, John 6. 47. This is Life Eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, Joh. 17. 3. As many as were ordained to Eternal Life believed, Acts 13. 48. Our Redemption by the Blood of Christ is Eternal Redemption,

Heb.

Heb. 9. 12. The Salvation which Christ hath purchased for us, is *eternal Salvation*. He is become the Author of *Eternal Salvation* to all that obey him, Heb. 5. 9. Those excellent unseen good things which God hath prepared for his People in the World to come are *Eternal*. The things that are seen are *Temporal*, but the things that are not seen are *Eternal*, 2 Cor. 4. 18. Our future Inheritance is an *Eternal Inheritance*, Heb. 9. 15. An *Inheritance Incorruptible*, that *fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. 1. 4. The Glory which is reserved for Believers in the Kingdom of Heaven, is *Eternal Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17. And the Crown that shall then be set upon the Head of the Faithful, is *A Crown of Glory that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. 5. 4. All these and many more Scriptures which might have been produced, as a thick Cloud of Witnesses afford us abundant Evidence of this Truth, That the future Happiness of God's People is Everlasting. Now to apply what hath been spoken.

Use 1. This gives us a just Occasion of admiring the rich Grace and unspeakable Goodness of God to us, who hath prepared such a Blessed and stable Condition of Happiness for us, and hath

made our very Downfal by the Sin of *Adam* a Step to advance us thereunto. If we had never fallen, we had never been raised so high for ought we know. The Condition of Man before his Fall, was indeed most happy, in Respect of the Integrity of his Nature, and that Perfection of Holiness and Righteousness, in which after the Image of God he was created; and in Respect of that inward Quiet, Tranquility, Peace and Joy which he then had, arising from the Sense of God's Love, and the Interest which he had in his Favour. For while he was in the State of Innocency, there was nothing that might occasion any Breach between God and his Creature, nothing that might interpose as a Cloud to deprive him of the comfortable and cheering Influences of the Light of God's Countenance. But yet his Condition at best, was changeable and uncertain. In Regard of the Liberty and Mutability of his Will, he was subject to fall, and under a Possibility of losing all that Happiness which he was at present possessed of. And this, if seriously considered, could not but cast a Damp upon his Spirit, and be a great Allay of his Comforts and Enjoyments even while he was at the Top of his Felicity.

licity. But this is the Complement and Crown of the Felicity of the sound and sincere Christian, that it shall never have an End. 'Tis an amazing, an astonishing Circumstance of our future Blessedness, that after Ten Thousand times more millions of Years than there are single Dusts, or small Sands in the vast Body of the whole Earth, our Happiness should be still as far from an End as it was in the first Moment of our Entering upon it. How can we ever enough adore the Riches of that Grace which hath provided such sure Mercies, and Everlasting Consolations for us.

Use 2. How solicitous should we be to get Assurance of our Title to this blessed Estate! What Pains should we think too much for procuring it! Things that are of exceeding great Value, and withal durable, we have in high Esteem, and are willing to be at the Expence of any Labour to attain them. Lo, here are most excellent and glorious things set before us, such as *neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear hath heard, nor have entred into the Heart of Man*; and besides their transcendent Excellency otherwise, they are also Eternal, and eternally ours, when once we come to be possessed of them;

them; no Power shall ever be able to rob us of them, or to wrest them away from us. Whence is it therefore, that while we lay out our Strength, and wast our Spirits in the Pursuit of empty and perishing Trifles, and worthless Toyes, which we no sooner get Possession of, but they presently take to themselves Wings and flee away; we are unwilling to take any Pains for attaining those excellent and durable things which, being once attained, can never be lost? What Folly and Madnes is it thus to prefer Earth before Heaven, and things Temporal before the things that are Eternal! What hath bewitched Men, to speak in the Language of the Apostle to the *Galatians*, that they should thus forsake their own Mercies, and thrust away from themselves Eternal Life? Is Eternal Life so mean, so cheap, so worthless, and so contemptible a thing, that any thing in the World that our Hearts are set upon, should be accounted worthy to be sought after and pursued with more Pains and Industry?

Use 3. This administers matter of sound Comfort to sincere Christians in every Condition. They may oppose the lively Hopes of Eternal Life to all those
Evils

Evils which they meet with in this World. Do they meet with many outward Troubles and Afflictions here? They shall hereafter have an Eternity of Exemption from them all. There is no Proportion between their Sufferings in this World, and their Enjoyments in the other World. *The Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed,* Rom. 8. 18. Are they sorely burthened with the Power and Prevalency of their Sins and strong Corruptions? Is this most grievous and afflicting to them, that *when they would do Good, Evil is present with them,* and that upon all Occasions, *they find a Law in their Members, warring against the Law of their Mind, and bringing them into Captivity to the Law of Sin?* The End of Christ's Coming into the World was to *Save his People from their Sins,* Matth. 1. 21. and to *bring in everlasting Righteousness,* Dan. 9. 24. The Time is hastening, when he will *present his Church and every particular Member thereof to himself, without Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing,* Eph. 5. 17. When they shall be crowned with spotless Innocency, and *walk before him in White for ever,* Rev. 3. 4. Are their Souls often under a Cloud?

Cloud? Doth the Devil by his Temptations, often darken their Minds, and disturb their Peace? The time is approaching, when Satan shall be for ever confined to his Prison, and shut up in the Bottomless Pit; when he shall never any more have Access unto them either to interrupt or impair their Comforts and Enjoyment of God; when they shall rejoice, and their Joy shall none take from them; when they shall be admitted to the immediate Vision and Fruition of God, *in whose Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand there are Pleasures for evermore, Psal. 16. 11.*

Now follows the second particular beforementioned, namely, That Eternal Life is the free Gift of God. *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them Eternal Life, John 10. 27, 28. By Grace ye are saved through Faith; and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of God, Eph. 2. 8. Being justified by his Grace, we are made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life, Tit. 3. 7.* Thus is our Salvation still ascribed to the free Mercy and Grace of God, in opposition to Works, whereby we might properly earn, merit, or deserve any such thing at the Hands of God. *God hath saved us, and called us*
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with an Holy Calling, not of Works, but according to his own Purpose and Grace, 2 Tim. 1. 9. And so again, Tit. 3. 5. Not by Works which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us. To the same Purpose it is, that Election to Eternal Life is called *The Election of Grace*, Rom. 11. 5. and they who shall obtain Eternal Life are called, *Heirs of the Grace of Life*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. Now, these two, Work and Grace, the Apostle opposeth, and makes to be utterly inconsistent, Rom. 11. 6. where having spoken of the Election of Grace, he means Election to eternal Life, he presently adds, *If it be by Grace, then is it no more of Works, otherwise Grace is no more Grace; and if it be of Works, then is it no more of Grace, otherwise Work is no more Work.* Now to apply this Point.

Use 1. This confutes the foul Error of the Church of *Rome*, concerning the Merit of the Saint's good Works. They teach, that holy Men do properly merit or deserve Eternal Life by their good Works, and that upon their Obedience Eternal Life is due to them. An Opinion so full of Pride, so derogatory to the Glory of God's free Grace, so contrary to the very Design of God in the Salvation

tion of Sinners, which is the Exaltation and glorifying of his Mercy, and so contrary to the whole Tenor of the Gospel, as nothing can be more. That nothing that any Man doth or can do, can merit Eternal Life at the Hands of God, is evident many Ways.

1. All our Obedience is a due Debt; we owe it unto God upon the Account both of our Creation and Redemption; and therefore our Saviour hath taught us to acknowledge and profess after we done all that we can, that we are *unprofitable Servants, and have done but what was our Duty to do*, Luke 17. 10. So then upon this Account, though we had never committed any one Sin in Thought, Word, or Deed, all our Days, and though we had in the whole Course of our Lives kept all the Commandments of God perfectly, even to the least Tittle, yet by all this, we could have merited nothing, seeing it had been no other than the Paying of a Debt. Now if a Man should pay you what he had long owed you, might he plead that as a meritorious Action, by which he had deserved some great Reward of you? If to imagine such a thing, were most unreasonable and absurd between Man and Man, How much

much more between God and Man, where there is an infinite Distance between the Inferior pretending to merit Heaven by his Obedience, which is but the Paying of his Debt, and his Superiour to whom it was, upon the highest Accounts, most justly due?

2. Our very best Performances are imperfect; they are accompanied with many Defects, they are defiled and blemished with much Corruption, that adhereth to them, and is mingled with them. *All our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags*, Isai. 64. 6. What therefore can we deserve at the Hands of God, by the best of them, but Punishment? What we have done best, if God should impute our Failings to us, would condemn us eternally, so far would it be from deserving Heaven at the Hands of God. This David was deeply sensible of, and therefore he said, *Lord, if thou shouldest mark Iniquity, who might stand?* Psal. 130. 3. And again, *Enter not into Judgment with thy Servant, for in thy Sight shall no Man living be justified*, Psal. 143. 2.

3. Whatever Good there is in any of our Actions or Performances, is from God; and to him alone we are indebted for it. All our Strength and Ability to do

do what is acceptable to God, is from himself: *He worketh in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure*, Phil. 2. 13. How then can we be conceived to merit of him by that which he himself works in us and bestows on us?

4. Besides that little Good which you do, and which you do imperfectly and lamely, and which you do in God's Strength, and not in your own, how many have been your Sins and Provocations otherwise in the whole Course of your Life! *Who can understand his Errors*, saith the Psalmist, *Psal. 19. 12.* So again, *Innumerable evils have compassed me about, mine Iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up, they are more than the Hairs of my Head; therefore my Heart faileth me*, *Psal. 40. 12.* If a Man after God's own Heart, as by the Testimony of God himself, *David* was averred to be, was loaded with the Guilt of so many Sins, what may any of us think of our selves? Have not we all much more Reason to make the same Complaints that he did? What Place then is there for Merit in those who are by their Sins so many ways obnoxious to the Justice of God? Can they be
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thought to merit Heaven, who have so many ways deserved Hell?

5. If by our good Works we could merit Heaven, then must there needs be a Proportion between Mens good Deeds and Heaven, between the Work and the Reward: There must be an Equality of Worthiness between the Work by which a Man merits, and the Reward that is merited. The Work must be of such Worth and Dignity, as it may be worthy of such a Reward. But there is no Proportion between what we do or suffer here, and Heaven. Heaven is such a Glorious and Eternal Reward, as infinitely surpasseth and transcendeth all our good Deeds and Sufferings. So the Apostle judged of this Matter. *I reckon, saith he, that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us, Rom. 8. 18. And our light Affliction, that is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory, 2 Cor. 4. 17.* Now if our Sufferings, even the Sufferings of the most glorious Martyrs, that expose themselves to the most exquisite Torments, and lay down their Lives for Christ, bear so little Proportion to the future Reward, how much less

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doth our imperfect Obedience bear thereunto! Thus we have seen how far short our best things come of meriting any thing at the Hands of God, and much more how far short we are of meriting the most glorious Reward of Heaven and Eternal Happiness. But here several things are objected to the contrary.

Obj. 1. Heaven and Eternal Happiness are often called by the Name of a Reward; as *Matth. 5. 11, 12. Coloss. 3. 24. Heb. 11. 26. Rev. 22. 12.* and in other Places.

Ans. Every Reward is not merited. There is indeed a Reward that is merited and deserved; and such a Reward is the just Punishment of a Man's Sin. And there is a Reward of Grace and Favour; and such is Heaven: Yea, such are all the Temporal Rewards of Obedience which God is pleased to confer upon his Servants here. They deserve not any Reward at all. When they sow in Righteousness, they reap in Mercy, *Hos. 10.*

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Obj. 2. But the Scripture saith, that God gives to every Man and rewards every Man according to his Works. So *Rom. 2. 6. Rev. 22. 12.*

Ans.

Answ. He rewards them according to the kind, Quality, and Measure of the Good which they have done. They who have done more Good, and have done it in a better manner, shall receive a greater Reward. But he doth not reward them according to the Merit of their Works; for there is no such thing as Merit on the Creatures part, in Respect of God. *Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy, saith the Psalmist, for thou renderest to every Man according to his Works, Psal. 62. 12.* As if he had said, were it not, that thou art freely Good and Bountiful, and that thou shewest Mercy to undeserving Creatures, our best Works would have no Reward from thee.

Obj. 3. But 'tis further said, that the Apostle makes God's rewarding the good Works of his Servants, an Act of Justice or Righteousness. So 2 *Thess. 1. 6.* *It is a righteous thing with God to render Tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you that are troubled rest.* So again, 2 *Tim. 4. 7, 8.* *I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness which God the righteous Judge shall give*
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me at that Day. So 1 John 1. 9. *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins.* And Heb. 6. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your Labour of Love.* Now say they, if it be Righteous with God to reward the good Works of his Servants, and if he should be Unrighteous if he did not reward them, then it must be, because by their good Works they deserve a Reward, the Reward is due to them.

Answ. That there is no Merit or Desert either in the Persons or Services of God's People, they themselves do acknowledge; for they utterly disclaim both the one and the other, *Isai. 64. 6. We are all as an unclean thing, say they, and all our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags.* And yet a righteous thing it is with God to reward their Services, and that upon a double Account.

1. In Reference to the Merits of Christ, who hath deserved it for them, though they have not.

2. In Reference to his own Promise to reward their Services. For though that Promise was freely made, though there lay no Obligation upon him to make it, yet having made it, 'tis a righteous and just thing with him to make it

it good, and to be as good as his Word.

Obj. 4. But God's People are in Scripture said to be worthy of this Reward. So the Apostle speaks of the *Thessalonians*, being *counted worthy of the Kingdom of God*, 2 *Thess.* 1. 5. And so Christ speaking of those of the Church of *Sardis*, that had not defiled their Garments, saith, *They shall walk before me in White, for they are worthy*, *Rev.* 3. 4.

Ans. Worthiness in these Passages of Scripture doth not signifie any Merit, but a Meetness; and this also in God's most gracious and merciful Account, and according to his free Ordination and Constitution. So *John* the Baptist speaks, *Luke* 3. 8. *Bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*, that is, suitable to that Profession of Repentance which ye make; or Fruits worthy of Repentance, for the same Word is there used, and can signifie nothing else but a Meetness and Suitableness of their Works to sincere and sound Repentance. So *to walk worthy of our Vocation* or Calling, is to walk suitably thereunto, *Eph.* 4. 1. And *to walk worthy of the Lord*, *Coloss.* 1. 10. is to walk suitably unto our Relation to Christ as our Lord and Saviour: Or, suitably unto our Relation to God, as our God

and our Father. We are here to consider, that God requires a certain Meetness, a Meetness of Dispositions and Qualifications in all that shall be saved, namely, Faith, Repentance, Holiness, Perseverance. But these things, though they qualifie us, and make us meet, make us such as God requires we should be in order to Salvation, yet do we not merit Heaven by being thus prepared and qualified for it. Every due Qualification for obtaining any Favour is nor meritorious. A Man's being born in such a Town or County may qualifie him for some Priveleges or Preferments, without which he were not capable of them; but yet he doth not thereby merit them. A Man's Poverty may qualifie him for some Favours, as for a Share in the Charity of some Benefactor, for a Place in an Alms-house, or the like; and yet no Man will say, there is any Merit in a Man's Poverty. Add hereunto, that the Meetness for Heaven which God expects, is from himself, *Coloss. 1. 12. He makes us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, and then as such he admits us thereunto. He gives Grace, and then he richly and bountifully rewards it. He crowns his own
Grace

Grace which he hath freely wrought in and bestowed upon his Children. And this may suffice to have been spoken concerning that Use.

Use 2. This also confutes another abominable Error of the Church of *Rome*, concerning Works of Supererogation as they call them. They hold, that some eminent Saints may not only fulfil the Law of God and perfectly keep the Commandments, but supererogate and do more than God requires of them; and consequently, that they may not only have good Works enough to merit Heaven for themselves, but have some over and above to help their Neighbours withal. But where have we any Warrant for this in Scripture? Have we not *all sinned*, and do we not *all come short of the Glory of God, being justified freely by his Grace*? Rom. 3. 23, 24. What good Works hath any sinful Man to spare for another, that hath not enough for himself without the free Grace and pardoning Mercy of God through Christ? *Adam* in the State of Innocency had no Holiness to spare, nor hath any Saint or Angel in Heaven.

Use 3. Let us therefore give unto God the whole Glory of our Salvation.

Let us cry *Grace, Grace*, unto it, as *Zerubbabel* cried at the finishing of the Temple, *Zach. 4. 7.* *The four and twenty Elders, Rev. 4. 10, 11. fall down before him that sitteth on the Throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their Crowns before the Throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Honour, and Glory, and Power.* Let us also do as they do. If we have the Benefit and Comfort of what God doth for us, nothing can be more reasonable than that he should have the Glory thereof.

Now followeth the third thing to be treated of, That 'tis upon the Account of Christ, and for his Sake, that Eternal Life is given to Believers. This the Holy Scriptures frequently ascribe unto Christ. *This is Life Eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, John 17. 3.* Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have Access by Faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God, *Rom. 5. 1, 2.* Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant Mercy hath begotten us again to a lively

lively Hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us, who are kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4, 5. We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the Suffering of Death crowned with Glory and Honour, that he by the Grace of God might tast Death for every Man. For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Suffering, Heb. 2. 9, 10. Though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him, Heb. 5. 8, 9. This is the Stone which was set at nought of you Builders which is become the Head of the Corner, neither is their Salvation in any other; for there is no other Name under Heaven given among Men whereby we must be saved, Acts 4. 11, 12. So St. John speaking of Christ, saith, This is the true God and Eternal Life, 1 John 5. 20. In all these Scriptures, unto which many more might be added, we see, that Salvation and Eternal Life
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is attributed to Christ as the Author, Purchaser, and Procurer of it. To him, and to him alone belongs the Glorious Title of *the Saviour of the World*, John 4. 42. His Business and Errand hither, the End and Design of his Coming into the World was to bring Salvation to lost Creatures, who must else have perished Everlastingly. *This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the World to save Sinners,* 1 Tim. 1. 15. *The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost,* Matth. 18. 11. For this Reason, was the Name of Jesus given him by order from Heaven, *Because he was to save his People from their Sins,* Matth. 1. 21. *And to deliver them from the Wrath to come,* 1 Thess. 1. 10. Briefly, the principal Design of the Gospel is to publish the Tidings of Salvation to be obtained by Christ, and to propound the Terms on which it may be had. *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins, and consequently Eternal Life,* Acts 5. 31. *Whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have Everlasting Life,* Joh. 3. 16. *He that believeth on the Son, hath Everlasting Life; he that believeth not on the Son shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth*

abideth on him, John 3. 36. God hath not appointed us to Wrath, but to obtain Salvation by Jesus Christ, 1. Thess. 5. 9. 'Tis the constant Doctrine of the Scriptures, that all Spiritual Blessings are conveyed to us, and conferred on us in, through, and by Christ. He is of God made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption, 1 Cor. 1. 30. God hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ, Eph. 1. 3. I might here shew more particularly how all the Parts and Steps of the whole Contrivance and Work of redemption and Eternal Salvation, is founded on Christ, or hath relation to him, or is managed, carried on, and perfected by him.

1st. In him we are elected to Salvation. God hath chosen us in him, Eph. 1. 4. that is, he hath chosen us to Salvation through him, as he that was to be the Mediator between God and Man to work it out and effect it. We are appointed to obtain Salvation by Christ. 1 Thess. 5. 9.

2dly. Our Vocation or effectual Calling is through Christ. We are called with an Holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his Purpose and Grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the World began, 2 Tim. 1. 9. We

9. *We are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God had before ordained, that we should walk in them. Created, that is, effectually called, converted, renewed.*

3dly. *Our Adoption is through Christ. We are predestinated to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ, Eph. 1. 5.*

4thly. *Our Justification is by Christ. By him all that believe are justified from all those things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses, Acts 13. 39. Being justified by Faith we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. 5. 1.*

5thly. *We obtain the Pardon of our Sins through Christ. To him give all the Prophets Witness, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive Remission of Sins, Act. 10. 43. Him hath God set forth as a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood for the Remission of Sins, Rom. 3. 25. Forgive one another as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you, Eph. 4. 32.*

6thly. *Our Reconciliation to God is through Christ. So the Prophet Isaiah, speaking of the Sufferings of Christ, saith, He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquity, and the Chastisement of our Peace was upon him; that*

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is, by his Sufferings our Peace with God and our Reconciliation to him was procured, *Isai. 53. 5. We are reconciled unto God by the Death of his Son, Rom. 5. 10. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 5. 18.*

7thly. Our Sanctification is through Christ. *He loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctifie it, and cleanse it with the Washing of Water by the Word, Eph. 5. 25, 26. He gave himself for us, that he might purifie to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works, Tit. 2. 14.*

8thly, Our Redemption is through Christ; and this is a comprehensive Word that takes in all the rest, our compleat and perfect Deliverance from Sin and all that attends it. *We have Redemption through his Blood, Eph. 1. 7. We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation, say the four and Twenty Elders unto Christ, Rev. 5. 9. Now I come to the Application of what hath been spoken.*

Use

Use 1. Is it upon Christ's Account and for his Sake, that Eternal Life is conferred on Believers? And are we indebted to Christ for obtaining Eternal Salvation for us, and whatsoever is required of us in order thereunto? How much then should this raise our Esteem of Christ! How highly should it make us prize and value him! Should we not with the Apostle, *Phil. 3. 8. Count all things Loss and Dung for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ?* If thus we prize and value him, our high Esteem and Valuation of him will thus appear.

(1.) It will raise in us earnest Desires and Longings after him. Our Souls will pant after him, *as the Hart panted after the Water-Brooks*, as David expresseth his earnest Longings after God, *Psal. 42. 1.* We will so thirst after him as that nothing will ever quench our Thirst till we have attained him, and gotten an Interest in him.

(2.) If we highly prize him, we will take any Pains to get and obtain an Interest in him. To say we have an high Esteem of him, and yet to indulge our selves in a slothful Neglect of the Means for obtaining him, is a vain thing. If you highly prize and value Christ,

Christ, let it appear by your restless Endeavours after him, pray much, read, wait on God at publick Ordinances, commune often with your Heart, often take an Account of your self, make diligent Enquiry how much nearer you come towards being satisfied touching your Interest in Christ, keep a narrow Watch over your Heart, Words, and Ways; give all Diligence in attending on all Means, that may further or promote your attaining Christ, and Assurance of your Interest in him: When thus you do, when this is the constant Business of your Life, your daily Practice, then may you satisfie your self, that you highly prize Christ.

(3.) If you highly prize him, you will be willing to part with any thing to get him; you will purchase him if need be, with what is dearest to you, if you cannot have him upon other Terms. If he be in your Eye the Pearl of great Price, you will, with the wise Merchant in the Gospel, *Matth. 13. 46. Sell all to get Possession of him.*

(4.) If you highly prize Christ, nothing in all the World shall prevail with you to part with him. Neither worldly Advantages nor Disadvantages, neither

ther the Flatteries nor the Frowns of the World, neither Promises, nor Threatnings, neither the deceitful Baits of Temporal Profits, or Pleasures, or Honours, nor the Terrors of Afflictions or Persecutions, or Death it self, shall ever be able to make you disown him.

(5.) If you highly prize Christ, you likewise will highly prize the Gospel in which Christ is revealed and offered to you. You will reckon the Enjoyment of it among your choicest Mercies. You will count any Condition tolerable, yea, comfortable and happy, so long as you may enjoy the Light of the Gospel: And you will reckon no Condition comfortable without it. You will count no Misery like that of being deprived of the Gospel: You will dread nothing more, you will pray against nothing more.

(6.) If you highly prize Christ, you will prize other things so much the less. If Christ be the fairest of Ten Thousand in your Eye, other things will have little Beauty or Desirableness in them. The Lustre and Excellency of Christ rightly apprehended and accordingly valued, will darken the Glory of all other things; and the invaluable Worth of Christ will beat down the Price of all other

other things, and make them of small Account with us, as they were with the Apostle in the Place before mentioned. Now, if you ask how you may attain thus to value and esteem Christ, I answer.

1. Labour to get a Sense, a thorough Sense of your need of him. 'Tis our Sense of the need we have of things, and the Usefulness of them to us, that sets a Price upon them, and this many times, though the things be otherwise of small Value. When our present Circumstances are such as we must have a thing, and we cannot be without it, then we so prize it as we are willing to purchase it at any Rate. Now such, and so great is our need of Christ, that without him we are for ever miserable; We must have him, or we are sure to perish Everlastingly. He that is deeply sensible hereof, that looks upon himself as undone for ever without Christ, How highly doth he esteem him! How precious is he in his Eyes! But such as see not, as feel not their need of Christ, they have no Esteem for him, they wretchedly undervalue him, and despise him. They will part with nothing which they care for, to attain him; They prefer every

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Toy and Trifle, every base Lust before him. The Want of a thorough and effectual Sense of Mens Need of Christ is not the least Cause of his being so much disesteemed and undervalued in the World. Till Men feel the Burthen of their Sins more, and till they feel their Misery in Respect of Sin and the Punishments of it more, 'tis not to be expected, that they should prize Christ as they ought. Acquaint your self with your Sins, the huge Numbers, the heinous Nature, and horrid Aggravations of many of your Sins, and the Danger of your sinful Condition, the many fearful Judgments that continually hang over your Head here, and the Wrath of God, which without Repentance, you will be for ever exposed unto in the other World; consider of it often, meditate on it seriously, and this will by Degrees endear Christ to you, and make him pretious in your Eyes.

2. That you may highly prize Christ, labour to know him. 'Tis our Ignorance of him, that makes us slight him. Acquaint your self with his Worth and Excellency, and with his Suitableness to your Condition: How fit and able, how ready and willing he is to relieve you, as having in himself whatever Relief in
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any kind the Necessities and Exigencies of your Soul call for and require; and being as full of Love and tender Compassions, as the distressed Sinner can wish or desire. *In him, all Fulness dwells*, to make up all our Defects, to supply all our Wants, to heal all our Spiritual Diseases and Infirmities, to cure all our Maladies, and perfectly to rescue and deliver us from all those Evils which we either fear or feel, which we are either in Danger of, or groan under. In short, he is as the Apostle speaks, *Heb. 7. 25. able to save to the uttermost, all those that come unto God by him.* If you have not an high Esteem of him, it must needs be, either because you do not know him, or because you do not know your self. It must be, either because you do not know his Worth and Excellencies, and his Suitableness to your miserable Condition: Or, because you do not know your self, your own sinful and miserable Estate, and the utter Impossibility there is of your being effectually relieved any other Way in all the World than by him, who came into the World on purpose to be a *Propitiation for our Sins*, 1 John 4. 10. *To give himself a Ransome for many*, Matth. 20. 28. and *to save that which*

was lost. Matth. 18. 11. And this may suffice to have been spoken touching that Use.

Use 2. If Eternal Life be conferred on Believers upon Christ's Account, and for his Sake; then give all Diligence to make sure your Interest in Christ, that the Hopes and Expectation you have of Eternal Life through him, may not be disappointed; and you fall short of Heaven at last. That this will be the sad and deplorable Condition of very many that profess the Christian Religion, and perhaps, make sure Account to go to Heaven, cannot be doubted, if we believe the Holy Scriptures, and give any Credit to what is in them revealed and declared concerning this Matter. Our Saviour hath upon several Occasions acquainted us herewith. *Many are called, saith he, but few are chosen*, Matth. 20. 16. That is, many are externally called, have the Gospel preached unto them, live in the Light and under the Dispensations of the Gospel; many are acquainted with the Way of Salvation by Christ; have Christ made known and freely offered to them; have the Terms discovered and laid open to them, upon which Christ and all his Benefits may be theirs if they stand not

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in their own Light, and refuse to accept of those Terms; many gracious Calls and Invitations to Faith and Repentance are afforded and vouchsafed them; and yet after all this, they are never inwardly and effectually called; they are never wrought upon and prevailed with to obey God's Call, to come in to Christ, to accept of him as the Gospel tenders him to Sinners, and to give up themselves to his Conduct and Government. They still love their Sins and their wicked Lusts better than Christ, and better than their own precious, excellent, and immortal Souls, and so perishing in their Sins they appear to be such as though they were often called, yet were never chosen to Salvation. Again, our Saviour saith, that many shall claim Relation to him, profess and own him for their Lord, and plead their Acquaintance with him, and what they have done for him, who, notwithstanding all this, shall not by him be acknowledged to be such as by their external Profession they pretend to be. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say unto me, Lord, Lord, have we not*

propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name caſt out Devils and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you, Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity, Matth. 7. 21, 22, 23. And once more he hath expreſſly declared, that wide is the Gate and broad is the Way that leadeth to Deſtruction, and many there be that go in thereat; but ſtrait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it, Matth. 7. 13, 14. Yea, it is further declared by our Saviour, that many who do not only make an outward Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion will fall ſhort of Heaven, but many alſo who uſe ſome Endeavours, and take ſome Pains to get to Heaven, will never get thither. Strive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate, ſaith he, for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able, Luke 13. 24. If we verily believe this, which we ſee our Saviour, who is Truth it ſelf, and can neither be deceived nor deceive, hath abſolutely and peremptorily declared, how ſolicitous ſhould we be about our Spiritual Eſtate, how careful to ſecure our Intereſt in Chriſt, and our Title to Eternal Life through him! How jealous ſhould we be

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be of our selves, lest we should be deceived, and be found at last among those who *have a Name to live, but are dead!* How restless should we be until we know by good Warrant from the Word, that we have *past from Death to Life*; that there are those things in us, *that accompany Salvation*, and cannot be found in any that everlastingly perish and miscarry!

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SERMON

The Fifth Sermon

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SERMON VI.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

NOT to trouble you with any unnecessary Preface, these Words are a part of *David's Charge* to his Son *Solomon*, who was to succeed him
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in the Throne. In which we may observe,

1st. The Matter of the Charge, or the things which he chargeth him with; *Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind.*

2^{dly}. The Arguments by which the Charge is backt and enforced: *For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee: but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

In the Charge, three important Duties are enjoined him;

1. The Knowledge of the true God, that God which his Father acknowledged, worshipped, and was in Covenant with; *Know thou the God of thy Father.*

2. The Service of that God; *Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him.*

3. The Manner how this Service is to be performed, exprest and specified in two Particulars, Sincerity and Cheerfulness; *With a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind.*

The Arguments or Motives enforcing these Duties are two; and those very weighty also, as the Duties are.

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The 1st Argument is drawn from the Omniscience, or most perfect Knowledge of God; *For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts;* Which Argument is especially suited to the Manner of the Service of God enjoined, the inward Sincerity of the Heart, and Willingness or Cheerfulness of the Mind therein required, which God the Searcher of the Heart takes Notice of; as also he espieth and discovereth all that secret Hypocrisie and Unwillingness in his Service, that lurks so secretly in the Heart, as no other Eye but his can discern it.

The 2^d Argument is drawn from the great Consequence of his serving God and adhering to him, or of his neglecting to serve him, and forsaking him; the great Benefit and Advantage of the one; *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee;* and the sad Calamity, and unspeakable Damage the other would unavoidably bring upon him; *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

I begin with the Matter of the Charge: *And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, &c.* Where before I come to speak of the Substance of the Charge, the

the Duties therein enjoined; I shall take some Notice of two Circumstances.

1. The Relation of the Person giving the Charge; *David* the Father, chargeth *Solomon* his Son, to know the true God and serve him.

2. The Description that he makes of the true God, or the Manner how he expresseth him and sets him forth; He calls him, *The God of his Father*: And each of these will afford somewhat that may be useful.

1. From the Person giving the Charge, we may learn the Duty of Parents with relation to their Children; which is, to principle them as *David* did his Son *Solomon*; to instruct them, and bring them up in the Fear of God.

On this Subject I shall so much the more enlarge, in regard of the great and shameful Neglect of this Duty among the Generality of Parents; as also, in regard of the great Benefits accruing both to Children and Parents themselves, from the conscientious Discharge of this weighty and important Duty; and the many woful Mischiefs attending the Neglect thereof.

How careful and conscientious *David* formerly had been this Way, *Solomon* himself gives

gives us to understand, *Prov. 4. 3, 4. I was my Father's Son, tender and only beloved, in the Sight of my Mother: He taught me also, and said unto me, let thy Heart retain my Words; keep my Commandments and live.*

And as his Father so his Mother also, took Care to instil sound and wholesome Principles into him. We read *Prov. 31. 1. of the Propheſie that his Mother taught him; that is, the Doctrine and Instruction, the wholesome Counsel and Advice she gave him, for so is the Word Propheſie there taken. And then in the 2d, 3d, and 4th Verses, how affectionately and passionately doth she teach him! What my Son! What the Son of my Womb! And what the Son of my Fours!*

— As if she had said, my Heart is so full of Love and Affection to thee, as I know not how to speak, or where to find Words to expreis my self. And then she goes on to mind him of what she judged might most concern him: *Give not thy Strength unto Women, nor thy Ways to that which destroyeth Kings: It is not for Kings, O Lemuel, (that is Solomon) it is not for Kings to drink Wine, nor for Princes strong Drink; least they drink*
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The Sixth Sermon.

and forget the Law, and pervert the Judgment of any of the Afflicted. And that this anciently was the Practice, and is the Duty of both Parents, we may gather from Solomon's Words, where he calls upon Men to mind the Instructions they have received from Father and Mother. So Prov. 1. 8. *My Son, hear the Instruction of thy Father, and forsake not the Law of thy Mother;* And Prov. 6. 20. *My Son, keep thy Fathers Commandment, and forsake not the Law of thy Mother.*

And as we have the Examples of the Saints of God, who were careful to instruct and teach their Children; so we shall find that they herein did no more than what they were enjoined. *These Words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy Heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy Children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sitteth in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,* Deut. 6. 6, 7. And the same Injunction is again repeated, Deut. 11. 18, 19. And Psal. 78. 5. *He established a Testimony in Jacob, and appointed a Law in Israel, which he commanded our Fathers that they should make them known unto their Children.* Which also is alike enjoined in the

the New Testament. *Ye Fathers, bring up your Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, Eph. 6. 4. And accordingly were Christian Parents careful herein. From this pious Care, it was that young *Timothy* was so trained up, *as he knew the holy Scriptures from a Child*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. And there are divers weighty Reasons for it. I shall now mention only Three.

1. The Interest God hath in your Children, for whom, and by whom you are intrusted to train them up. His they are more than yours, and therefore, he'll be sure to require an Account of you how you have managed your Trust.

(1.) Their Souls, their better and more noble Part are in a special Manner his, who is *the Father of Spirits* Heb. 12. 9.

(2.) He it is that in the Womb secretly frames and organizeth the Body, and fits it for the Soul, and that in such an admirable Manner, as that the Psalmist, as one astonisht at it, cries out, *I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*, Psal. 139. 14.

(3.) He it is that ties the Knot between them, that is the Author and Effector of that strange and misterious Union

on of the immortal Soul to the corruptible Body.

(4.) Besides all this, Christian Children are in Baptism given up and devoted to him; and Parents are put in Trust to educate them and bring them up for him. God therefore looks after the Education of his Children, and woe be it to Parents who are entrusted, if, through their Neglect, God's Children become the Children of the Devil.

God complains of the *Ismaelites*, Ezek. 16. 20. that they had offered his Children unto their Idol Gods: *Thou hast taken thy Sons and thy Daughters, whom thou hast born unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured.*

And what do they in Effect but offer their Children, or rather God's Children to the Devil, who take no Care to make them the Servants of God, but rather enter them in their tender years, and train them up in the Service of the Devil? How will they answer it when God shall call them to give an Account what they have done with his Sons and Daughters with whose Education they were charged?

2. It is a barbarous and a most unnatural thing for Parents to neglect the Souls of their Children; which all they do, who have no Care to instruct them in the Principles of Religion.

For what is there in which the Good and Safety of Children is more concerned, than the Everlasting State of their Souls in another World? What greater Danger, what more dreadful Hazard than that of falling into the *Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone*? Which is the Condition of every Child that comes into the World; we being all *by Nature the Children of Wrath*, Eph.

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Can you then stand by as unconcerned, and let your Children run on towards Hell in Ignorance and Profaneness? Can you see them hastening towards the bottomless Pit, and not make out after them, seasonably to take hold of them, and by holy Instructions and pious Education endeavour to recover them and secure them? If you can, what's become of natural Affection? Have you lost that which all other living Creatures in the World have? Are you become more savage and unnatural than the wild Beasts? The most untameable
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and untractable, the most fierce and cruel among them?

This is sad indeed; but this is the Effect of Sin; it bereaves Men of *natural Affection*, Rom. 1. 31. and makes them not only *like the Beasts that perish*, Psal. 49. 20. but in some Respects much worse.

3. Parents themselves have been Means of conveying Guilt and original Corruption to their Children; which makes them liable to Eternal Condemnation.

If they derive their Misery from their Parents, doth it not concern their Parents to endeavour to free them from it; at least by their Instructions and pious Care of them to endeavour to make them sensible of their Misery, and to bring them acquainted with Christ, by whom they may be relieved?

According to the Law, he that had wounded another Man, and thereby disabled him for the Works of his Calling, was not only to *pay for the Loss of his Time*, but he was also bound to *cause him to be thoroughly healed*, Exod. 21. 19.

You have given your Children a mortal Hurt, their Nature is so wounded and
weakened

weakened by original Corruption, derived from you, that 'tis impossible they should ever recover, unless the Sovereign Balsam of Christ's Blood be applied to the Wound.

Who then should be more ready and forward, more diligent and industrious, by good Instruction and pious Education to further and promote their Healing, what in you lieth, than you who have given them that deadly Wound? Can you seriously think of it, and your Bowels not relent towards them?

An honourable Person who had unhappily fallen under a Sentence, that might deprive his Posterity both of that Honour and Inheritance which else would have unquestionably descended to them, complained, that his personal Concernment did not go so near him as that of his Children: while other things did less affect him, this did cut his Heart, that through his Means his Posterity should so far suffer.

Should it not also deeply affect your Heart, that you convey that Sin and Guilt to your Children, by which they are deprived of that Honour and Patrimony which their Creation entitled them unto; and are now of Sons of God, and

Heirs of Happiness, become Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Eternal Misery?

If there be any means of recovering what they have lost, (as through God's unspeakable Mercy in Christ there is) who should rather endeavour to make them happy again than you, through whom they are become so miserable? And who in Reason should be thought to be able to do it with more Tenderness and Affection, with more Vigour and Activity, than you who are so near unto them, they being *Bone of your Bone, and Flesh of your Flesh*, and in a manner a part of your self?

You have had the Reasons, or so many of them as I thought fit at present to insist on. I come next to make some Use of what hath been hitherto deliver'd.

Use 1. How great then is their Sin, who, notwithstanding all that hath been said, the Practice of God's Saints in former Times, the peremptory and indispensable Command of God, and the weighty Reasons there are for engaging them to the Performance of this Duty; I say, who, notwithstanding all this, make no Conscience of instructing their Chil-

Children, or of lending their Hand to them to lift them out of that Pit into which they have cast them?

Ignorance of God and Christ is not so slight a matter as many make it. God says, *My People are destroyed for lack of Knowledge*, Hos. 4. 6. And who then are they that do destroy ignorant Souls, but such as being obliged thereunto, neglect to use the Means for bringing them to the Knowledge of God? And the more guilty of their Destruction are they, by how much they stand more obliged to instruct them: And who can be more obliged thereunto than Parents?

But yet much more blame-worthy, and more deeply guilty of the Blood of the Souls of their Children will two sorts of Parents be.

(1.) Such as neither instruct their Children themselves, nor take any Care, or manifest any Willingness to have them instructed by others. If Parents will not be prevailed with to do it themselves, yet let them not be such Enemies to the Souls of their Children, as to refuse the Help that shall at any time be offered them by others. If your Child be fallen into a Bog, and stick in the Mire, is it not enough, that you will not lend

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the poor Child your own Hand to help him out and preserve him from perishing, unless you also hinder any body else that would shew Pity to him.

(2.) Such Parents also are yet more deeply chargeable with the Blood of the Souls of their Children, who instead of instructing their Children in the Knowledge of God, and bringing them up for God, bring them up for the Devil; who from their Childhood, nurture them and train them up in the same Trade of Profaneness and Ungodliness which they have addicted themselves unto; who walk before them and lead them on in the broad Way that goeth down to the Chambers of Death.

Oh most unnatural and cruel Parents! Is this the Love they bear them? And are these their Bowels of Compassion towards the Fruit of their own Bodies? If this be all the Kindness they have for them, all the natural Affection they bear them, then let Lions and Tigers rise up in Judgment against them, who, as fierce as they be, yet shew more Kindness and natural Affection to their young ones; for they will dispose of them in Places of Safety and Shelter; they will not lead them to
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Places where they may be in Danger, or become a Prey to other wild Beasts; they will train 'em up to Wariness and Circumspection; and they will teach them how they may best secure themselves against all Enemies that may threaten their Ruine. But such unnatural Parents will do none of this for the Souls of their poor Children, but rather do all they can to betray them to Eternal Ruine.

But here, it may be, some will enquire, whence it comes to pass, that there should be in any Parents so great Neglect of the Souls of their Children? I answer, There are sundry Causes of it.

1. Ignorance in many Parents, who know nothing to purpose of God, or of the things of God themselves: And how should they teach their Children, who had need first to learn the very Principles of Religion themselves?

2. A prophane Contempt of Knowledge in others; as they have no Knowledge of heavenly things, so they value it not, neither do they look upon it as a thing desirable for themselves or theirs. Such were those of whom *Job* speaks, who say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways, *Job 21. 14.*

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3. An Hatred of Knowledge in others; an Averſation from it, and an Antipathy, or riſing of their Hearts againſt it. They have given themſelves up to the pleaſurable Ways of Sin and Profaneſs, and they would meet with no Diſcouragement or Check in thoſe Ways, and therefore they cannot endure that Knowledge which would be troubleſome to them that Way, which would ſo diſcover the Evil and Danger of their ſinful Courses, as they ſhould have leſs Content in them. *He that doth Evil hateth the Light, and cometh not to it, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reprov'd,* John 3. 20. Hence it is, that as they hate Knowledge themſelves, ſo they are willing to ſhut it out of their Families, they care not how little Knowledge their Children have, or any others that are about them.

4. In others, who have ſome Knowledge and Ability to inſtruct their Children if they would, Slothfulneſs is a Cauſe of their neglecting them: They will not take the Pains to be often dropping good things into them, and whetting heavenly things upon them.

And hitherto I may refer, that Fickleneſs and Inconſtancy in many, who, if they ſometimes make ſome Offer or

Attempt to instruct them, yet are presently off that Course again, and so letting fall what they sometimes take up, all that is done is as much as nothing, so that their Children never come to attain any sound and thorough Knowledge.

And how should they? For he that will teach Children to any Purpose, must have Patience and Industry, must daily renew, and constantly carry on the same Course of Instruction, yea, though he see for the present very small Fruit of his Endeavours; remembering that of Solomon, Eccles. 11. 6. *In the Morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thy Hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper either this or that.*

He that would pour Water into a narrow mouthed Bottle, must have the Patience to be longer about it, and to effect it with more Difficulty than if the Mouth were broader; and moreover, he must make Account that some may run beside, and be spilt, how careful soever he be in doing it. Childrens Capacities are small, and they are narrow mouthed Vessels, that can take in but a little at once. If you will fill them with the Water of Life, with the saving Knowledge of Christ, you must take Pains
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and Time to do it, and you must not be discouraged if much of what you endeavour to instil into them, seem for the present to run beside, and be spilt upon the Ground. It was your own Case when you was a Child your self: If God had not given Industry and Diligence to some Body to wait upon you, to follow you with *Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept*; and Patience also to bear with your Waywardness, Unteachableness and Fickleness, you would never have attained to know any thing of those Matters which it most concerns you to be acquainted with.

5. An erroneous Opinion groundlessly taken up, that Children need not, or rather should not be troubled with Matters of Religion in their tender Years; for, say they who are possest with this Error, to teach them before they are grown up and come to Understanding and Years of Discretion, were only to make them to take God's Name in vain, while they are taught to pronounce Words as Parrots, and to speak of the things of God which they understand not.

But these Persons should take heed how they make themselves wiser than God,

God, opposing their own Folly against his Wildom.

In that Scripture before cited, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15 where *Timothy* is commended for that he knew the holy Scriptures from a Child, the Word *βρέφος* used in the Original signifies a little Child, and most properly an Infant; to note how very timely his Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*, who, as 'tis probable, were his Teachers, began with him, even from his tender Years, and as soon as he began to be capable of Learning. And as for the Fear of taking God's Name in vain; I say,

1. We need not be more tender of God's Honour than he himself is: And if he be pleased to vouchsafe to have his Name and Words taken into the Mouths of Children when they are young and tender, why should we scruple at it? Satan, who, no doubt, hath an Hand in it, and suggests such plausible Reasons, is not so tender of the Honour of God: He can urge Scripture, as he did when he tempted our Saviour, *Matth.* 4. and cunningly frame Reasons from Scripture misapplied, that shall have a Shew of much Zeal for God's Honour, while he aims at nothing else but the Dishonour of

of God and the Destruction of Souls. He knows his own Advantages if he can by any Means prevail, that this Duty be neglected in tender Years. For,

(1.) In many he foresees, that if it be not done in their tender Years, 'twill never be done; for as they grow up they will be more unteachable; and possibly there will then be other Employment for them to take them up; or, as before he perswaded Parents, that it was too soon to begin to teach them, so now he will perswade them 'tis too late.

(2.) In the mean Time, though Parents may not teach them, yet Satan will be teaching them; he'll find Instruments to season their Hearts with Profaneness, and their Heads with false and destructive Principles, by which they shall be so fenced and fortified against all holy Instructions, as nothing that is good shall have Entertainment with them. When the Devil hath once taken the first Possession of them, and bar'd and lockt up their Hearts against all wholesome Counsels and Instructions, then undertake them when you will, you shall find it no easie Matter to fasten any good upon them.

2. 'Tis a Mistake, that God's Name is taken in vain by Children because they cannot clearly and fully understand those heavenly things that are offered them.

For (1.) God expects no more of Children than their Age is capable of; and therefore, what would be a Taking his Name in vain in others, is not so in them.

(2.) They have Memories, and the Use of their Tongues, and some weak Dawnings and Glimmerings of Understanding: And how can these be better employed than about heavenly things? They may be thus seasoned for God, and consecrated to him betimes. Call you this a Taking God's Name in vain? Is there not an high and a noble End in this early disciplining of them?

(3.) Who knows how soon God may begin to work upon Children, and how far God may sometimes encourage Parents by giving a Capacity and Sense of heavenly things beyond what could well have been expected from their Age?

God hath not been so far wanting to the Encouragement of Parents to discharge their Duty this Way, but that he hath ever and anon been wont to give some Signal Blessing upon their Endeavours,

deavours, even to the Admiration of Parents themselves and others; of which many Instances might be given.

If God were displeased with the Practice of instructing little Children, and if he looked upon it as a taking his Name in vain, would he cause such a Blessing to attend it, and would he give such Testimonies of his Acceptance thereof? Would he thus encourage Parents to go on in a Course never instituted or allowed of by himself?

Besides, do we not on the other hand plainly discern the Effects of his Displeasure against both Parents and Children, where this Course is neglected?

As for Children who had not the Benefit of holy Instruction in their younger Years, how profane and ungodly do they afterwards generally prove? And how stubborn and disobedient as they grow up? What Mischiefs and Plagues are they too often to the Places where they live? And what is their Trade and Course of Life, but to dishonour God, corrupt others, and draw down the Judgments of God upon themselves and all that are near them?

And as for such Parents as have so grossly neglected their Duty to them
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when young, what *Scourges* doth God make their ungracious Children to them? What a Grief and Heart-breaking to them? And what heavy Lives do they lead many Times, by Reason of those unsufferable Abuses and Injuries which they from Day to Day receive from those who should have been better nurtured and instructed by them in those Years when they were capable of it; and might have been, through God's Blessing, better fram'd and moulded, had not the good Conscience and Industry of their Parents been wanting to them?

Use 2. Let all Parents therefore be stirred up to a more conscientious Performance of this Duty towards their Children. And here let no Parents, how good soever, think themselves unconcerned in this Use: For who is there that is so conscientious and industrious herein, as that he needs no Spur to quicken him to his Duty?

What Parent is there whose own Heart doth not charge him with great Neglects this Way? How much Coldness and Indifferency! How much Inconstancy and Unevenness may all discern
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in themselves! How much Backwardness and Slothfulness in the Performance of this Duty!

If there be any Parents, Fathers or Mothers, whose Consciences do not check them and whose Hearts do not many ways condemn them for having failed, and come short of having done what they ought to have done for promoting the Salvation of the Souls of their Children, I am afraid that upon further Enquiry it will appear, that they are those who make least Conscience of discharging their Duty.

For the most Part, none are more ready to please themselves in what they do, as if they had done as much as is required of them, than they who have done least; none more forward to justify themselves, than they who have most Reason to condemn themselves.

Now besides what hath been already spoken to prevail with Parents to instruct and principle their Children in the Matters of Religion, There are yet four things more which I shall offer to their Consideration by way of Motive here.

I. There

1. There is scarce any thing in which they can do God better Service. For this is to provide as much as in us lies, that God may be known and obeyed by Posterity; that the Generations that are yet unborn may rise up and honour him; that Religion may be propagated, and the saving Knowledge of God and Christ be delivered over and transmitted from the Fathers to the Children as long as the World endures.

And how great and honourable a Service unto God this is, cannot but appear to any Man that will consider it. That we, *whose Days are but as an hand breadth,* Psal. 39. 5. *whose Life is as a Vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away,* Jam. 4. 14. who are so frail and corruptible, that in a manner we begin to die as soon as we live, should yet by so small and inconsiderable a Service as the Instruction of Children may seem to be, lay a Foundation of propagating Religion to the World's End, and of making the Name of Christ great amongst our Posterity when we shall have lain many hundreds of Years in our Graves, How great a thing is this! and how much Encouragement, even
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from this Consideration, have we to the Discharge of our Duty!

2. There is nothing in which we can express more true Love to our Children. Those Parents love their Children indeed, who love their Souls, and they only may be esteemed to love their Souls, who are careful to use the Means by God appointed for furthering the Salvation of their Souls.

The Soul is the most excellent, the most noble Part, that in which Man chiefly bears the Image of God; and that in Respect of which he excels all the visible Creatures, and by which he is distinguished from the Beasts that perish.

Now, what Love then can be comparable with that which carries you to endeavour by wholesome Instruction and holy Education to provide for the Eternal Happiness of your Childrens Souls? And as long as this is neglected, what else can you do for them that deserves the Name of Love?

And yet, alas! how little is there of this Love in most Parents! Fond Love enough there is, and too much, which shews it self in cockering them, in complying with their Humours, indulging them,
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and gratifying them to their Hurt and Prejudice; and adding Fewel to their natural Corruption, fomenting, cherishing, and heightening it, rather than curbing and restraining it, and by good means endeavouring to mortifie and subdue it.

But in the mean time, where is that true Love, which endeavours by Instruction out of the Word of God, to bring them acquainted with their Misery by Nature, and to lead them to Christ, through whom their Sins may be pardoned, their Corruptions healed, their Natures sanctified, and their Souls saved!

How much Care and Pains are laid out, and how much time is taken up in setting out, trimming, and adorning their Bodies! But oh, how very little in labouring to get their precious Souls to be adorned with Grace, and beautified with Holiness through the saving Knowledge of Christ! While Parents think their corruptible Bodies can never be fine enough; while they cannot endure to see the least thing out of order about them; how are their immortal Souls neglected!

How ugly and deformed through Sin are they! And how little Endeavour is there to get them cleansed and purified!

To get them *cloathed upon with that white Raiment* which might render them amiable and lovely in the Eyes of God! To get those inward and spiritual Ornaments of the *hidden Man of the Heart*, of the Soul, *which are in the Sight of God of great price*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 3. 4.

3. You can no way make better provision for Children here in this Life, than by bringing them up in the Knowledge and Fear of God.

For if by God's Blessing on your Endeavours, true Grace be wrought in them, and so they come to be in Covenant with God, then are they under his special Providence and fatherly Care. Then doth he undertake for them, that they shall be provided for and supplied with what is needful for them. He hath by many Promises secured them and their Parents of his Care of them.

Indeed whatever Promises of Supplies of temporal things God hath made to his, they all belong to them, when once they come to be of his Family, and to be numbred among his Children. Those Promises are either such as are made in more general Terms to all those

those who are in Covenant with God, and walk obediently before him; or such as are made in special to the Seed and Posterity of his.

(1.) For general Promises; God hath said, *He will never leave nor forsake his,* Heb. 13. 5. *He will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly,* Psal. 84. 11. *They that seek the Lord shall not want any thing that is good,* Psal. 34. 10. And *there is no lack to them that fear him,* Ver. 9. *He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he shall dwell on high, his Place of Defence shall be the Muniti- on of Rocks; Bread shall be given him, his Waters shall be sure,* Isai. 33. 15, 16. *First seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,* Matth. 6. 33.

Whence it is that the Apostle saith, *That Godliness hath the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. 4. 8.

And David, who had been a diligent Observer of God's Providences towards good Men and bad all his Days, never met with any one Example to the contrary. *I have been young, and now am old, saith he, yet never saw I the Righte-*

ous forsaken, nor his Seed begging Bread, Psal. 37. 25.

So then, Labour in the Way of virtuous Education and holy Instruction to see your Children such as truly fear God, and you will leave them a good Portion, though they should receive nothing else from you.

(2.) There are yet more special Promises made to the Offspring of God's Children, wherein God hath undertaken to provide for them, supposing they be such as imitate their Parents, and do not degenerate. How large and full is that Promise, *Psal. 112. 1, 2, 3. Blessed is the Man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his Commandments; his Seed shall be mighty upon Earth, the Generation of the Upright shall be blessed: Wealth and Riches shall be in his House.* Which Promise, though it be not always fulfilled according as the Letter of it may seem to import; yet,

1st, There are never wanting in the World some notable Instances of God's extraordinary Blessing on the Posterity of his Servants, even in outward things.

2^{dly}, That there are not more Instances of it, is, no doubt, in great part their own Fault, in regard they are wan-

wanting to themselves in performing the Condition of the Promise.

3dly, Though Parents be such as the Promise supposeth, yet the Children many times tread not in the Steps of their Parents, which they must do if they will expect what is promised.

4thly, Though Parents and Children be such as the Promise is made unto, yet God doth sometimes see it would not be good for them to have so plentiful an Estate; and God's Promises in Reference to Temporal things must still be understood with this Proviso, viz. as far as shall be for his Glory and their Good.

5thly, The Children of his Servants being such also as fear him, shall however never want what is sufficient, and what is best for them: So much they may always expect, and make sure Account of, as from this, so from many other Promises, and Declarations of God's Goodness towards the Posterity of those who fear him. *He sheweth Mercy unto Thousands of them that love him and keep his Commandments, Exod. 20. 6. He will bless those that fear him, small and great; them and their Children, Psal. 115. 13. His Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that*

fear him; and his Righteousness unto Childrens Children: to such as keep his Covenant, and to those that remember his Commandments to do them, Psal. 103. 17, 18. The just Man walketh in his Integrity, and his Children are blessed after him, Prov. 20. 7. The Righteous is merciful and lendeth, and his Seed is blessed, Psal. 37. 26. What Man is he that feareth the Lord? him shall he teach in the Way that he shall choose: his Soul shall dwell at ease, and his Seed shall inherit the Earth, Psal. 25. 12, 13.

Now, who is there amongst us all, that gives any Credit to the Word of God, who would not think his Children better provided for, and more sure never to want, being within the Compass of such Promises and so many other Declarations of God's Care of and merciful Respects to the Posterity of those that fear him, than if they were able to leave them many large Manors and Lordships?

But yet still this must be remembered, that if good Parents shall neglect the Education of their Children in the Fear of God, and if Children shall degenerate from the Faith and Holiness of their Parents, then do they forfeit all
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Claim to the Benefit of these Promises, and bring themselves under those Curses which God hath threatened to the disobedient and rebellious.

4. There is yet one Motive more which I shall make Use of to prevail with Parents to instruct their Children, and do their utmost Endeavour all other ways to get their Hearts seasoned with Grace, and with the true Fear of God; and 'tis this, that they know not how little while they may have the Opportunity of doing it.

They know not how soon it may please God, that either their Children may be taken away from them, or they from their Children. And in either Case, as it is a sad thing to have grossly neglected their Duty to them, so 'tis matter of great Comfort to have performed it with good Conscience and Diligence.

(1.) Children may soon be taken away from their Parents by Death; and what shall then support and comfort them in their Death, when they shall have Cause to fear how it may be with them to Eternity through their Neglect of their poor Souls?

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When the Thoughts of their deceased Children shall often recur and come into their Minds by Night and by Day, and together with those Thoughts, the fresh Remembrance of their unnatural Carriage towards them in taking no Care of their Souls, in using no effectual Means, no serious Endeavours to acquaint them with Christ, so far as their tender Years were capable thereof; how will this imbitter their Loss, and what a Sting will it put into that Affliction which would have gone near enough their Hearts, although there had been no such Circumstances to add to the Smart thereof!

Again, what a Stay and Support is it to the Soul, and how sweet and comfortable an Allay and Mitigation of the Parents Sorrow for such a Loss, when their own Consciences shall bear them Witness, that though amid many Weaknesses, they have, through the gracious Assistance of God, been enabled to do somewhat for securing their Souls; when as oft as they call to mind their deceased Children, they shall also call to mind what they unfeignedly desired, and in some weak Measure endeavoured to do for them while it pleased

pleased God that they enjoyed them: When the several Places that put them in mind of them shall also mind them where they were wont to teach and admonish them; where they were wont to pray with them and for them. You cannot easily believe, unless you have had Experience of it, how much this will contribute to the easing of your Heart, and the assuaging of your Grief; and how much the more patiently, meekly, and quietly you will submit to the Hand of God.

(2.) Parents may be taken away from their Children while in their younger Years; and it will be a sad parting, when having done nothing for their Souls, they must now for ever leave them; never to have any further Opportunity of making some amends to them for their former Neglects of them.

By Nature they were *the Children of Wrath*, and so they still are; their natural Estate was an Estate of Ignorance and Alienation from God; and in that Estate they leave them, having never taken any Care or Pains to help them out of it. Oh the Weight of this Burthen when it shall lie upon the Consciences of Parents going out of the World!

But

But having in any good Measure, through the Grace of God, discharged their Duty towards them, how comfortably may they take their Leave of them! Especially if they see the Blessing of God upon their Pains with them; if they see the Fruit of their Labours in the Change of their Hearts and the renewing of their Natures.

And though no such Change should be discernable, yet want they not the Comfort of having discharged their Duty to them; and they may also however be not a little cheered in Hope, that the Seed which hath been sown, shall not be lost upon them, but in God's due time spring up in them, albeit for the present there be little Appearance thereof.

SERMON VII.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

I Have done with the Motives; I shall now in the next Place shew, what is to be done by those Parents who would in a right manner perform this Duty, and so as they may hope their Endeavours shall be successful.

And

And here not to insist on all that might be spoken concerning this matter, I shall first shew how Parents themselves must be qualified, that they may be fit to perform this Duty to their Children; and then how they ought to carry themselves, and what is to be done by them in the Performance of it. Of both these in order.

That Parents may be duly qualified for this Duty,

I. They must be furnished with some competent Measure of Knowledge themselves. How should they enlighten their Children who are in the dark themselves? How should they impart to them what they themselves have not?

And here the Ignorance of many Parents is most lamentable, who are no more fit nor able to teach their Children, than their Children are to teach them.

And yet they must not think that their Ignorance excused them, and dischargeth them of their Duty. They are bound to get Knowledge, and 'tis their great Sin they do not endeavour it, especially where they want not
Means

Means to attain it, if they would make Use of the Means which God affords.

Plutarch tells us of *Eurydice*, an heathen Woman, who had so great a Love and Affection to her Children, and so earnestly desired, that they might be well taught and instructed, that she applied herself to learn her Letters when she was now much stricken in Years, to the end she might be able to teach her Children.

Shall not this poor Heathen rise up in Judgment against those Christians, who are so little troubled at their own or their Children's Ignorance, that they will use no Means for attaining Knowledge? No, not the Knowledge, without which neither they nor their Children may ever hope to be saved. Reason would judge, that though they did not care what become of their own Souls, yet natural Affection should carry them to endeavour the Eternal Happiness of their Children: But the Truth is, he who doth not truly love his own Soul, can never love the Soul of another, how dear soever to him.

Neither here let any say, they have lost so much Time already, that 'tis now too late to begin. The Heathen
Man

Man had so high an Esteem of Learning, that he thought it worth the while to begin to learn his *Greek Alphabet* when he was now threescore years old. And should not we have as high an Esteem of the Knowledge of Christ?

'Tis never too late to begin to acquaint our selves with the Elements and Principles of the Doctrine of Christ if we be still ignorant of them.

The longer we have been Strangers to this Knowledge, which is so absolutely necessary to the Salvation of us and ours, the more highly it concerns us to be diligently looking out after it and pursuing it, that so, if it be possible, we may redeem the time which we have lost.

2. Another thing necessary to fit and qualifie Parents for instructing their Children is, a spiritual Sense and Savour of those heavenly things which they do in some Measure know. A Man may have learnt the things of God by rote as we say: And you know he that hath learnt no better himself cannot be thought to be very fit to teach others.

It is an experimental Acquaintance with heavenly things, that Parents should labour after if they would be fit and able to teach their Children as they ought. He who hath felt the Power of Divine Truths upon his own Heart, shall be able the more feelingly and affectionately to impart and recommend them unto others.

It is said of our Saviour, *That he spake with Authority, and not as the Scribes*, Mark. i. 22. Those Truths which come from the Heart, and inward Experience of the Speaker, come in upon the Hearts of others with Authority and Majesty, with Power and Efficacy.

But he that was never soundly affected with the Truths of God himself, he that never had the Experience of the Working of them upon his own Soul, is likely to make but slight and cold Work of it, when he undertakes to teach others.

As he said of the Statue or Image that seemed to be lively and sprightly, and so to promise much, but could neither speak nor move; *oportet esse aliquid intus*, there must be something within, there wants a Soul in it to quicken and enliven it: So here, there must be
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something within the Teacher, his own Experience and Feeling, to give Life and Power unto the Truths he utters and endeavours to fasten upon those who are to be instructed by him.

I speak not this to discourage any who have any Measure of sound Knowledge of heavenly things, from communicating it to others, especially to their Children and Relations; let them make the best Use of it they can; But to excite them to labour to feel within themselves, the Power of what they know, to the end they may both have more Comfort in it themselves, and be fitter to impart it to others in such a manner as may be most to their Edification.

3. To qualifie them for this Service of instructing their Children, aright, they must have right Apprehensions of the invaluable Worth of their Childrens Souls.

The Soul of every poor little Infant that comes into the World, is of more worth than all the World besides, setting Men and Angels apart.

Take all the Glory and Lustre, all the Excellencies and Perfections, all the Riches and Treasures that are to be found

found among all the other Creatures, and cast altogether into one Mass, yet is the Soul of a poor Child, though clothed in Rags, of more value.

If this seem strange to us, let us consider the Immortality of the Soul, a Noble Being that shall never cease to be; the admirable Faculties of Reason, and Liberty of Will with which it is endowed; and its Capableness of Grace and Glory, of being made like unto God, and of seeing and enjoying him to Eternity.

And let us add to all this, the invaluable Price with which it is purchased and redeemed, the precious Blood of the Son of God, who is himself God blessed for ever; and then let us cast our Eyes again upon the World, with all its Perfections, Lustre, and Riches, and search if we can find any thing to be compared with those forementioned excellencies, high Dignities and Prerogatives of the Soul.

If this rich Value of the Souls of poor Children be taken into serious Consideration by Parents, what a Treasure will they think there is committed to them in their Children! And how will they ever think they have done
S 2 enough

enough for them to preserve them from everlasting Woe and Misery!

But the Worth of Childrens Souls is little known, and less considered by most Parents. If they knew the Value of them, could they be so unthankful for them as sometimes they are? Could they grieve, and repine, and murmur when God gives in these Blessings, as if some great Unhappiness had befallen them? And which is more to our present Purpose, could they find in their Hearts to suffer these excellent Souls to miscarry for ever, and fall into unquenchable Flames through their Neglect of them?

When *Plato* had been discoursing to his Scholars of the Excellencies of the Soul of Man, and in particular of the Immortality thereof, it is reported, that some of them were so affected with his Discourse, that they presently went and made themselves away, that they might put their Souls into that Condition of Liberty and Freedom which their Master had told them the Soul should enjoy after its Separation from the Body.

Poor dark Creatures, that would by an horrid Offence against God, and an unnatural Sin against themselves, turn their

their Souls out of their Bodies, before they had done any thing to provide for them another Habitation! But yet, if this so affected Them, should not the Consideration of the Worth and Excellencies of the never dying Souls of Children so far affect Us, as to make us think no Pains too much, whereby we may fit them for another World, and secure them against Eternal Ruine?

Awake therefore and rouze up your selves, O ye careless and secure Parents, and discharge your Duty to your Children. Their excellent and immortal Souls cry unto you to lend them your Help to pluck them as Brands out of the Fire: Oh be not so hard hearted to them as to deny them your best Assistance!

So much of the Qualifications requisite in Parents, that they may be fit to instruct their Children, and to do it as they ought.

I come now to shew how it is to be done, if they would attain their End, and not lose their Labour. And their End must not be only to furnish them with some Measure of Knowledge in Spiritual things, that they may be able

to give an Account of them to others, or to speak and discourse of them; but so to season their Hearts with heavenly Truths, as they may *receive them with the Love of them*, and feel the Power of them. 'Tis sanctified Knowledge, and a saving Acquaintance with Christ; *The Renewing of the Holy Ghost*, as the Apostle calls it, *Tit. 3. 5.* an holy Change of their Hearts and Natures, which they must aim at.

St. Paul expressing the earnest Desires and vehement Longings he had after the Conversion of the *Galatians*, at least such of them concerning whose spiritual Estate he saw Reason to doubt, saith, *My little Children, I travail of you in Birth again till Christ be formed in you, Gal. 4. 19.* Such holy Affections towards Children, such earnest Longings after their Conversion and Salvation should there be in all Parents when they undertake the Instruction of their Children: They should be able to say, they travail in Birth of them again till Christ be formed in them.

You tender-hearted Mothers, who know what 'tis to travail of your Children in the natural Birth, have you any Experience of that Travail of them

them in the Spiritual Birth, of which the Apostle speaks? Do you long to see them new Creatures? Have you many inward Conflicts and Agonies, many solicitous Thoughts and Fears about their spiritual Estate? Is there nothing that concerns them about which you are more thoughtful? Nothing which you do more earnestly desire in their behalf? Nothing in which you should more rejoice, than to see *Christ formed in them*? And is this the great thing you propound to your selves and aim at, in all the Pains you are willing to undergo in their Instruction and Education? And would you know how you may best attain your End?

1st, Be much in Prayer to God for them. I mention this in the first Place for a double Reason: both because 'tis the principal Mean for promoting the Good of their Souls, being that which sanctifies all other Means, and procures a Blessing on them; and also because 'tis the first thing that Parents can do for their Children's Souls, they being not for some time capable of receiving Benefit by any other Means. We read, *Prov. 31. 2.* that *Solomon's Mother* with

much Love and Affection instructing him, calls him, *the Son of her Vows*; many Prayers she had offered up and presented unto God for him. Prayer, much Prayer, and a diligent Use of other Means will do great things.

'Twas *Monica's* Confidence concerning her Son, that however for the present she saw little Fruit of her Prayers and Tears, yet it could not be, that a Child for which she had prayed so much, should perish. And surely 'tis a rare thing, and that which is seldom or never seen, that a *Son of Vows*, of many Vows, a Child of much Prayer, should finally miscarry, unless there be some other great Error and Miscarriage in his Education.

If any Parents should pray much for Children, and use no other Means; if while they pray, they should be careless in ordering, disciplining, and instructing them, they cannot reasonably expect any comfortable Returns of their Prayers.

But let these two be united, and go hand in hand, much earnest Prayer unto God, and a conscientious Use of all other Means which God hath appointed, and you have as good Grounds to ex-

expect God's Blessing upon your Endeavours, as on any thing you can undertake or set your Hand unto.

God hath promised *to be a God to his and unto their Seed*, Gen. 17. 7. *to circumcise their Hearts and the Hearts of their Seed*, Deut. 30. 6. *to pour out his Spirit upon their Seed, and his Blessing upon their Offspring*, Isai. 44. 3. *To shew Mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his Commandments*, Exod. 20. 6.

Consider then with your self: If there be infallible Truth in these Promises, if they be all *Yea and Amen*, as the Apostle speaks of God's Promises in general, 2 Cor. 1. 20. to whom should they rather be made good, and who may more warrantably expect the fulfilling of them, than those Parents, who being themselves such as unfeignedly desire and endeavour to love God and keep his Commandments, do also as unfeignedly desire and endeavour that their Children may be such as themselves; and to the end they may so be, pray much for them, and neglect no other Means which God hath ordained to be made Use of?

And here for the Strengthening of the Faith of Parents, they are to consider

sider further, that 'tis God that thus disposeth their Hearts: 'Tis he, that stirs them up to pray for Children; 'tis he that gives Care and Diligence in instructing and educating them; 'tis God, that so frames their Hearts as they desire nothing more in their Children's behalf than that He would be pleased to bestow his Spirit and his Grace upon them: And is not all this a great Argument, that he intends Good to their Souls?

May they not reason as *Manoah's* Wife did, *Judg.* 13. 23. would the Lord have done all this, if he had no Purpose to give his Grace to Children, or to vouchsafe any Blessing on means?

But how lamentable is the Neglect of many Parents this way! I am afraid there may be some that hear me this Day, and many more in this Town who hear me not, who seldom come to this Place to hear, that pray neither for themselves nor for their Children: whose Irreligion and Prophaneness is such, as they are more likely to curse their Children than to pray for them. And truly as Prayers take Effect, so do Curses also many times. We see the sad Effects of them in the wicked
Lives

Lives and graceless Conversation of such Children.

(2.) Another Reason why I mentioned Prayer in the first Place was, because 'tis the first thing to be done for Childrens Souls. This must not only accompany Instruction, but prevent it. As soon as ever God bestows Children on you, you must begin to pray for them.

If this be done earnestly and constantly, as the Discharge of this Duty to them will be a great Comfort and Stay unto you, if God should take them away from you in their Infancy, as I have formerly shewed; so if they live, it will lay a hopeful Foundation of doing the more Good upon them by your Instructions afterwards when they come to be capable of them.

Little can be done, it may be, by way of Instruction till they be three or four Years old: But oh! how many Prayers might you lay up for them in the mean time! If you could ingage your self to pray constantly for them but twice a Day, it would amount to something in three or four years.

But besides your minding them in your ordinary Course, and at your set Times of Prayer, how many other fervent

vent Prayers might you send up to God for them with Ease! How many Occasions are there which stir your natural Affection, and draw out your Love towards them every Day! how many Occasions affect your Heart for them, and move your Bowels and Compassions towards them!

And how easie were it at such times to take the Advantage of natural Affection, and while Love is stirring and your Heart is warm, to send up some Ejaculation or short Prayer unto God for their Souls, that he would pardon original Sin, or actual if they be capable of it; that he would give them his Grace, accept of them in Christ, and make them Inheritors of his Kingdom.

If we had but half as much spiritual Love to Children as we have of natural Affection, how often in a Day should we lift up our Hearts to God for them! And when afterwards they come to be, in Respect of their Age, fit to be instructed, how great an Influence would all those Prayers have upon our Endeavours! And how much more effectual would it render them!

Have you done thus, you that are Parents? Hath this been your Course
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from the Time that God first blessed you with Children? If it hath, 'tis well; and I make no doubt but you have, and will have the Comfort of it. If not, you have Reason to beshrew your self, and to bewail your Folly and improvidence, that you should lose such Opportunities for furthering the Salvation of your Children's Souls, and not improve them to their Advantage, when you might so easily have done it, and it would have cost you so little. What now remains but that you begin to redeem the Time and Opportunities that are lost, by a more wise and thrifty Improvement of the like Opportunities for the Future.

2dly, Begin with Children betimes; in their tender years, when they are very young, as soon as you can discover any Capacity or Understanding in them, endeavour to acquaint them with God, and with the Difference between Good and Evil in those things which most belong to them as Children, and which their Age is most capable of: Acquaint them by Degrees with the most plain and easie Principles of Religion; and labour to mould and frame

frame them to a Teachableness and Tractableness. Thus was *Timothy*, as we have heard, by the Care and Industry of those who had the Charge of his Education, acquainted with the holy Scriptures from a Child, a little Child. And *Solomon's* Father began to teach him when he was young and tender, *Prov.* 4. 3, 4. The Benefits and Advantages of this early Instruction of Children are divers.

(1.) Hereby much Sin in younger Years is prevented, and a Check is given to natural Corruption, as soon almost as it begins to discover it self. Corrupt Nature will soon be acting and putting forth it self, and the longer you let it have its Course, the more headstrong it is; as he said of Fame, *vires acquirit eundo*, It is more vigorous by Motion, the further it goes on the stronger it grows. Ill Habits in young Children are quickly and easily gotten, but not so easily lost again.

(2.) In their tender Years they will be more pliable, and you can better order them and govern them, to get them to take in those Instructions which you tender them; whereas afterwards they will be more unteachable if

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let alone at first. You may bend and bow a tender Twig one way or t'other as you will; you may order it as you please, it will obey your Hand, your little Finger: But let it grow till it becomes a Tree, and then your whole Strength cannot master it, or make it yeild to you.

(3.) Though Children understand but little, and their narrow Capacities take in but a very few things; yet those few things make deep and lasting Impressions. We find how strongly and firmly we retain those things which we learnt when we were Children; whereas the things we took in afterwards are much more easily lost. The things which in our riper Years we took a great deal of Pains about to imprint them thoroughly in our Memories, do not so surely abide with us, nor so tenaciously stick by us, as the things which we learnt in our Childhood, though we did then in a manner but play with them.

(4.) We cannot easily conceive how much some young Children are capable of; and how strangely God doth sometimes ripen the Parts, and enlarge the Capacities of others very early.

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And then as for those who are of more slow and dull Apprehensions, the more Pains must be taken with them; there must be *Precept upon Precept, and Line upon Line; here a little and there a little*: that's indeed the Method of teaching those that *are weaned from the Milk, and drawn from the Breasts*, who are young and tender, as the Prophet speaks, *Isai. 28. 9, 10.* but specially those of them who are of weaker Memories and shallower Capacities.

And what Patience or Industry should be thought too much by Parents to save their Childrens Souls?

And for their Encouragement let them know, that albeit for the present, they seem to sow their Seed upon the Rock or the Sand, where it takes no Root; though they may think they have laid out their Pains to little Purpose, yet as their Children grow up, and come to be a little ripper, God will remember all their Labour of Love to them, and give in the Fruit thereof in a more ample Blessing.

To conclude this Head; how fruitless soever present Endeavours may appear to be with some, and how small and inconsiderable the Fruit of Instruction may seem to be in most Children, yet let no
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Man think it a small thing to season the Hearts of Children with the Knowledge of God while they are young. *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem testam diu*, what you first season the Heart of your Child with, the Savour of that it is most likely to retain as long as it lives. *Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*, Prov. 22. 6.

3dly, Parents must keep their Children in some awe, and so carry themselves towards them as they may know their Distance, else they shall never be able to do them any Good; for without this it is impossible they should instruct them, discipline them, and govern them as they ought. They must have their Children *in Subjection to them*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 3. 4. if they think to instruct them and educate them well. God therefore, to the end Parents might be the better enabled to discharge their Duty towards their Children, hath invested them with a Power and Authority over them.

This Authority if once they lose, they lose all; they can no more order their Children in a due Manner, than

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a Man can manage and rule a wild Colt when he hath let go the Rains. Love them they must, and be tender of them, and discover it they may sometimes in due manner, prudently, and at meet Seasons; but they must withal keep them humble, make them know what Honour, Reverence and Subjection is due from them to their Parents, neither feeding their Pride, nor gratifying their Humours.

In this Carriage towards them there is a great deal more Love than in laying the Rains on their Necks, letting them turn up their Heels against their Parents and run wild as they list. As he said of Joy, *Res severa est verum gaudium*, so may I say of Love; true Love to Children is a severe thing. *Deus bonos amat fortiter*, saith the *Stoick*, God loves good Men with an hardy Love; he is not so fondly tender of them, but that when there is Cause, he can cross them, and chasten them, and make them smart, and put them to Pain: And such must the Love of Parents be; and Children must be contented it should be so, seeing 'tis the Order which God hath set, and constituted for their Good.

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If any proud and stiff-necked Children be so rebellious against their Parents as that they will not bear this Yoke, but shake it off; let them know, that they shake off God's Yoke which he hath put upon their Necks; and let them take heed lest thereby they provoke him to lay an heavier Yoke upon them.

You may read, *Jer. 28. 13, 14.* that when *Hananiah* had broken the Yoke of Wood which *Jeremiah*, by God's Command, had made to signify the Subjection of the Nations to the Yoke of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Empire and Government, God commanded *Jeremiah* to make an Iron Yoke instead of the Yoke of Wood which *Hananiah* had broken. If you, ungracious Children, whoever you be, shake off the more light and easie wooden Yoke of Subjection to your Parents, which God hath laid upon you, take heed lest in the Room of that, he put an Iron yoke upon your Necks. Are you stronger than God, that you thus contest and struggle with him? For against God it is, that you oppose your selves, while you oppose your selves against his Ordinance.

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But this by the Way: To return to Parents, they, (as hath been said) if they would train up their Children as they ought, must keep them in some Awe and Subjection to themselves, and whatsoever Liberty they sometimes think fit to give them, they must still have them at their Command, be able to take up the Rains, and hold them in more strictly when they please.

The more this can be done by Love, and in Ways of Kindness, the better; but if that will not do, those other Courses which *Solomon* directs unto must be taken; and no Parents must think themselves wiser than *Solomon*, if they do, they themselves in the end are like to smart most for it. If any Parents should be so fondly and indiscreetly tender of their Children, as not to find in their Hearts to take up the Rod when need is, they are very likely to find in the End, that God makes their Children a Rod to correct them for their sinful Indulgence to them.

Adonijah was *David's* Darling, he must not be crost: *His Father* had not displeased him at any time, in saying, why hast thou done so: And *Absolom* was another of them, fine Children both of them,

them, no doubt, and very goodly and proper Men as they grew up, 1 King. 1.

6. And who could love them enough, or be so hard-hearted as to use any Severity towards such lovely Children?

But what was the End of this? And how did they requite their Father? First, *Absolom* takes Arms, and unnaturally riseth up against his own Father to take away his Life, 2 Sam. 15. And then *Adonijah*, the other Darling, he treads in his Brother *Absolom's* Steps, and requites his aged Father as he had done, 1 King. 1.

The Intent of all that I have spoken under this Head is this, that Parents would keep their Children in some Awe, and keep up that Authority over them which God hath entrusted them with for their Childrens Good. A Point of so great Concernment in the Education of Children, that the Neglect thereof is the Ruine of many Children, frustrating and rendring utterly unsuccessful all other Means for their Good. Wherefore before I dismiss this particular, I shall touch at two or three things by which the Authority of Parents over Children is usually weakened and impaired, which must be avoided. And these are,

1. An inconstant and uneven Carriage towards Children: Sometimes a great deal of Severity towards them, and at other times as great or a far greater Excess of fond Indulgence to them. This uneven Carriage can never do well, but must of Necessity lessen their Authority: For what Awe or Reverence former Severity had begun to work in them, all that is presently lost again by the indulgent Carriage that follows: And Children will quickly come to have the Length of their Parents Feet, and care little for their Frowns and Threatnings, if they be sure to be so well recompenced afterwards as to be almost in the same Breath kissed and dandled so much the more.

2. The Disagreement of Parents in ordering their Children. When the one by Fondness and Indulgence invalidates and undermines the Authority of the other. If the one Parent, though upon just Occasion, use any Severity, then the other presently, by an unreasonable and hurtful Pity, heals all again, and embraceth the Child with so much the greater Fondness and Indulgence, and so carries the Matter as if some
great

great Injury had been done the Child. A Practice so dangerous, and of so ill Consequence, that nothing more steels and hardens the Hearts of Children against their Parents.

And herein usually Mothers are most to blame. I grant, the Mother may be allowed to love her Children with a Degree of Tenderneſs above the Father. (1.) In regard of her Sex, being naturally more tender. (2.) In regard, that ſhe hath ſeveral ways undergone and done more for her Children, which is a great Endearment of her Children to her: But ſhe muſt be ſo much the more careful, that her ſtrong and tender Affection degenerate not into Fondneſs, by how much ſhe is the more prone thereunto. That would be a cruel Love to her Children, like that of the Ape, which never leaves hugging and claspings her young one till ſhe kills it.

'Tis moſt comfortable for Parents, and moſt profitable and happy for Children, when Father and Mother are unanimous, and mutually further and aſſiſt each other in the Uſe of whatever Means may further the Good of their Children; when each of them ſtudies and endeavours

to keep up the Authority and Reverence of the other in the Hearts of Children.

3. Parents lay their Authority low, and lose that Reverence which is due to them from their Children, by their own Sins. The holy and unblameable Conversation of Parents, will gain them Reverence in the Hearts of their Children, unless they be very lewd and ungracious: Even wicked *Herod*, had in his Heart a Reverence for *John* the Baptist, because he knew, *that he was a just Man, and an holy*, Mark 6. 20.

But the wicked and ungodly Conversation of Parents will despoil them of their Authority, and render them vile in their Children's Eyes, and cause their Children to contemn them in their Hearts, according to what God hath threatned, *1 Sam. 2. 30. They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.* There is no such Way for Parents to keep up a Reverence of themselves in the Hearts of their Children, as to walk before them holily and unblameably. And this brings me to the next particular.

4thly, Parents must give their Children good Example: They must tread
out

out a Path with their own Feet for them to walk in. If they be not careful of this, they will do them much more Hurt by their evil Example, than ever they will do them good by all their Instructions. For

(1.) Evil Example in the Teacher enervates Instruction, and weakens the Force of it. It doth so of it self, and by a natural Consequent; for when the Child sees the Parent act quite contrary himself to what he teacheth him, and commend that with his Mouth which he really disowns in his Life, how can he think him to be in earnest? And then again, besides this, there is a Curse attending the Endeavours of wicked Men for the most part, God so blowing upon them and blasting them, as little Good comes of them.

(2.) We are much more apt to be lead by Examples than by Precepts. One Example or Pattern works more upon us than an hundred Instructions.

(3.) Children are most apt to observe, and imitate their Parents, not only in regard they still converse with them, and have their Actions still in their Eyes, but likewise, in regard of the Interest their Parents have in their
Love

Love and Affections. We more willingly take up after and imitate those whom we love.

(4.) Children are in nothing more apt to imitate their Parents than in what is Evil. *Dociles imitandis turpibus & pravis omnes sumus*: We are all very docil and teachable in what is naught, and very forward to imitate there where we should not. Wherefore if Parents would benefit their Children by wholesome Instruction, they must take heed lest by their Example, they pull down whatever by their Teachings they endeavour to build up.

Parents think they may take Liberty at home, and carry themselves as they will before their Families and Children: but they are mistaken. 'Twas well spoken of him, *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*; there is a kind of Reverence due to a Child: We should be very circumspect in the Presence of Children, and very much afraid of doing any thing before them, which is unfit, and which may draw them to the Imitation of us in what is evil.

But alas, how little of this Circumspection and Care that no evil Example be given Children, is there to be found in many

many Parents! What Revilings and Evil-Speakings, what Clamours and Outrages, what Brawlings and Fightings, what Cursing and Swearing, what Jeering and Scoffing at Religion, what heathenish Neglect of Prayer and other Family Duties, are the Parents themselves guilty of, at home in Presence of their Children!

And what can be the Fruits hereof, but that the Children treading in their Steps be as bad as their Parents, yea worse? For in matters of Morality, he who writes after a bad Copy commonly excels his Teacher.

And no Wonder: For what Check can such Parents give to the Vices and sinful Excesses of their Children, who are so vile themselves? *Unde tibi frontem libertatemque parentis cum facias peiora senex?* With what Face (said he well) canst thou take the Liberty and Authority of a Parent to rebuke and restrain thy Child's Misdemeanours, who, when thou shouldst give him better Example, art as bad or worse thyself? If Parents will reform their Children, they must begin with themselves, and be Patterns to them of whatever Good,

Good, by their Admonitions and Instructions they recommend unto them.

And as Parents, who would promote the spiritual Good of their Children, and train them up in Piety and Virtue, must be good Examples to them themselves, so they must take the best Order that they can, that no evil Example be given them by any other in their Families.

Let the Conversation of Parents be most unblameable and exemplary, yet if Servants or any other in the Family give them evil Example, that evil Example is more likely to be taken up and followed by the Children, than the good Example and Instructions of their Parents. Evil Example hath a great Advantage, it meets with corrupt Nature, with a suitable corrupt Inclination in the Hearts of Children, which disposeth them to the Imitation thereof: But good Example, and wholesome Counsels and Advices, meet with Opposition within, from depraved Nature, by means whereof it is, that they do not so easily prevail with or work upon Children. It was therefore a very serious and useful Precept, *Nil dictu fœdum, usuque hæc limina tangat, intra quæ puer est.* Let no impure or dishonest

honest Word or Action come near those Doors where a Child is within.

5thly, Parents must cause their Children to attend upon the publick Ordinances as soon as they are of Age to receive Benefit thereby; and afterwards call them to an Account, and examin them what they have learnt.

1. They must bring them to publick Ordinances: When the Law was solemnly read in the Congregation of *Israel*, soon after their Coming into the Land of *Canaan*, according as God had before commanded; we find, that their little Children were present together with their Parents at the Reading of it. *Joshua read all the Words of the Law, the Blessings and the Cursings according to all that is written in the Book of the Law: There was not a Word which Joshua read not, before all the Congregation of Israel, with the Women and the little ones, Josh. 8. 34, 35. I and my House will serve the Lord, saith Joshua, Josh. 24. 15.* when he names his House, we may be sure, he excludes not his Children, a principal part of his Family; and though he there speaks of the Service of God in general, yet is it to be understood so as com-

comprehending all the particular Ways, and Duties of God's Worship, both publick and private. And indeed whatever almost can be alledged for Parents Attendance on the Duties of God's publick Worship, the same doth also oblige Children when they begin to understand so much as to be able to reap any Benefit by Ordinances. I shall only mention three or four things, that should engage Parents to bring their Children to the publick Assemblies as soon as they are fit to be ordered and governed there, without Disturbance to the Congregation, yea though they can at first receive but small Benefit thereby.

(1.) It will keep them from being worse imployed at home in the mean time; or, it may be, abroad in the Streets. If but little Good be at first gained, yet some Evil is prevented.

(2.) It will inure them to a sober, quiet, silent, and reverent Carriage in time of the Worship of God, and beget in them an Awe and Reverence of the Ordinances of God. And this one thing is no small Advantage: For hereby they come to be more capable of receiving Benefit by the Ordinances of God

God afterwards as they grow up. An Awe and Reverence of the Ordinances of God prepares and disposeth their Hearts to be more easily wrought upon by them.

(3.) They will, by Degrees, be acquainted with the several Parts and Ways of God's Worship in Publick, and sooner be so ripened as to receive further Benefit by them.

(4.) Some of those few things which they have begun to learn in Private, they shall ever and anon hear in Publick; and that will fix them in their Memories, and make them take better Notice of them, and heed them better than they did before.

(5.) Publick Ordinances cannot be reverently and duly attended on by old or young but some Benefit will thereby accrue unto them. God hath not appointed them, and set them up in his Church for nothing, neither are the many Promises made to them that shall attend on them, in vain and to no purpose. 'Tis good for Children to be in God's Way; to be waiting *at the Wells of Salvation*, as the poor Man at the *Pool of Bethesda*, Joh. 5. 5. Who knows how soon Christ may pity poor Children, and
begin

begin to heal their Souls, as he healed his Body! He who hath said, *Blessed is the Man, that heareth me, watching daily at my Gates, waiting at the Posts of my Doors*, Prov. 8. 34. hath therein spoken enough to encourage old and young to wait upon him in the Ways of his publick Ordinances, though there were nothing else in all the whole Scripture to encourage them. So much of that first Branch, concerning the Duty of Parents to bring their Children to publick Ordinances.

2. They must also call them to an Account, and examin them.

(1.) Children are not easily made serious and attentive; they have nimble Fancies, wandring and roving Minds; now their Eyes are gadding up and down, upon this and that Object; and presently their Thoughts are at home, taken up with Toys or Vanities there, which they take Pleasure in: And it were well, if Children only were faulty these Ways; if some of these were not chargeable upon riper Years as well as upon Childhood. But now 'tis a great Help to fix their Minds and settle their Thoughts when they know they shall be

be called to an Account, and must remember something. This makes them attentive, and mind the present Duties. But what do I speak of Children? I am afraid there are few amongst us all but would be much more heedful and attentive than they are, if they were to be dealt with as Children; if they, as Children, were sure to be called to an Account afterwards of what they remember.

(2.) As this Course of after-Examination fixeth their volatile and nimble Spirits, and makes them attentive at present, so it helps them better to understand what they have heard and remember: They remember Words, it may be, at Church, and bring them home; and little more: but when they come to give an Account thereof, then they begin to understand the Matter contained in these Words which before they did not. Besides, now their Parents at home can more plainly and familiarly acquaint them with the Meaning of what they remember, and not leave them till they do, in some Measure, understand it. A Course which if Parents would take, how greatly might they benefit their Children!

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(3.) It imprints things better in their Memories for retaining of them afterwards. We find that what we hear and remember for the present, is much sooner lost, if we have no Occasion to repeat it or speak of it afterwards. But if we have afterwards in Private been discoursing of it to others, we may observe, that 'tis not so easily lost, it sticks much better with us.

(4.) There is yet another Benefit of calling Children to an Account at home after hearing, and 'tis not the least. Thereby Parents have an Opportunity of endeavouring to get Childrens Hearts affected with what they have heard for in Private they can more particularly apply things to them, and labour to make them sensible of those things which is indeed the great End of all our hearing and remembring.

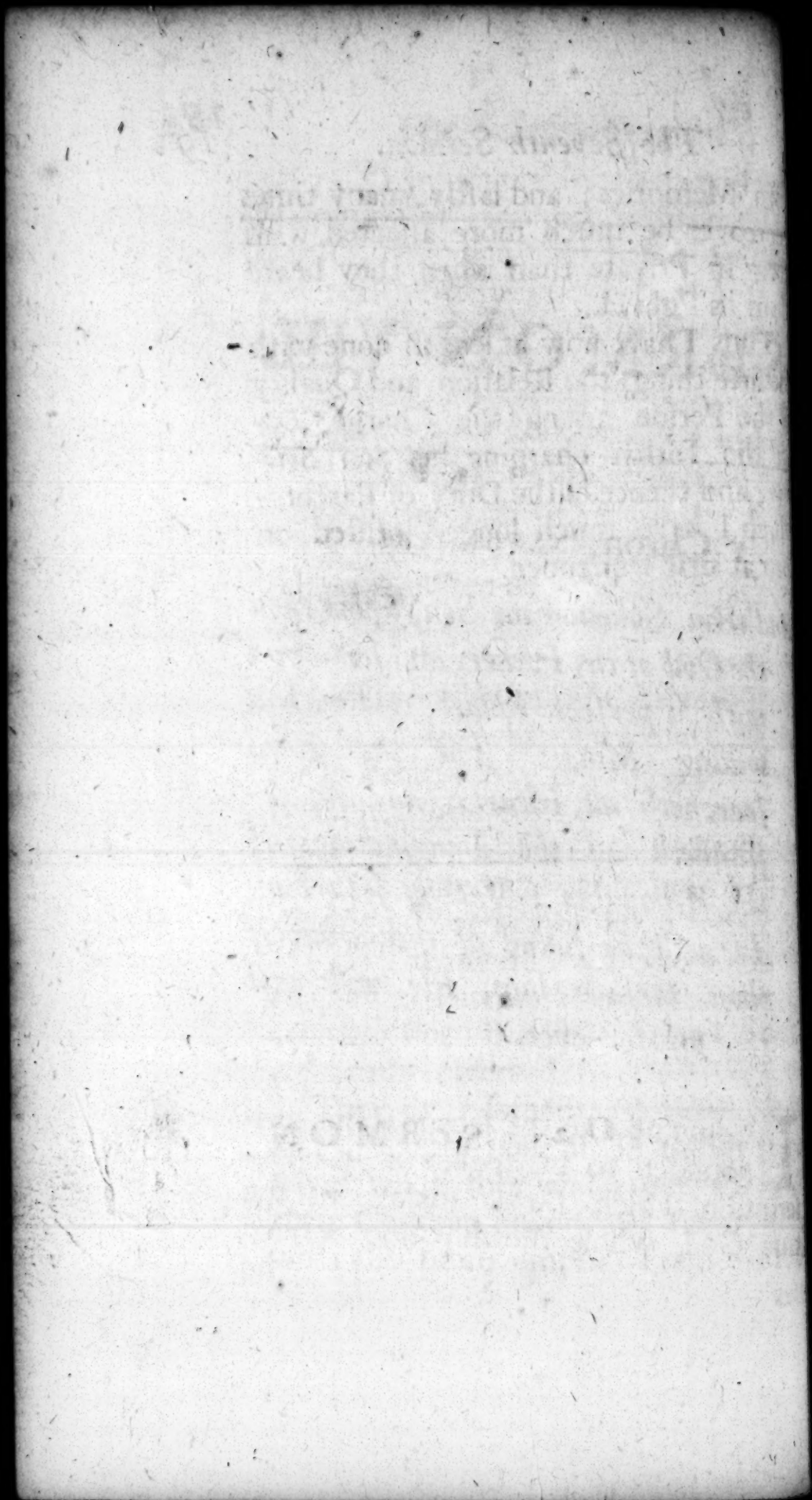
(5.) Let me add this also to all the rest, that Parents themselves may receive no small Benefit by this Course constantly observed.

They will sometimes more clearly and distinctly understand things themselves while they endeavour to make their Children understand them; they will also more imprint them in their

own

own Memories; and lastly, many times moreover be much more affected with them in Private than when they heard them in Publick.

Thus I have now at length done with the first thing, the Relation and Quality of the Person giving the Charge, *David* the Father charging his Son *Solomon*; and thence of the Duty of Parents; which I have much longer insisted on than at first I intended.



SERMON VIII.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

I Come now to the second thing propounded to be spoken of, the Description which *David* makes of the true God, whose Worship and Service

he recommends unto his Son *Solomon*; or, the Manner how he sets him forth; He calls him *the God of his Father*; *Thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father*; that is, the God which thy Father hath acknowledged and worshipped, and is in Covenant with.

Which Description of the true God *David* the rather made, that he might thereby the better encourage and engage his Son to the Service of the same God.

Whence we may observe, That the Piety of Parents is both a great Encouragement and a great Ingagement to Children to give up themselves to the Service of God,

1. Children descended of religious Parents, have great Encouragement to serve God. For they have all manner of Advantages to set them forward, and help them on in the Service of God, and in the Way to Heaven.

1st, They have the Advantage of their Parent's Prayers for them. For they who are truly pious themselves, will make Conscience of praying for their Children; and they will think them-

themselves not so much concerned to beg any thing else in all the World for them, as that God would be pleased to bestow his Grace upon them, and make them his Servants. How great a thing this is, to advance and help forward Children in the Way of Life, cannot but be acknowledged by all those who believe the Force and Efficacy of Prayer. And the Prayers of Parents in this Case have some special Advantages besides.

(1.) There are many Prayers, that religious Parents offer up to God for their Childrens Souls. They are soliciting for them at the Throne of Grace, and carrying on this Suit in their behalf all their Days, if they be not grossly regardless of their Duty towards their Children. If Children live to any Years, and Parents conscientiously and constantly pray for them, What a Mass of Prayers is laid up for them!

(2.) The Prayers of Parents for Children are likely to be earnest and fervent Prayers: Natural Affection to Children helps to give Warmth and Life to Prayer. Many Prayers and fervent Prayers also are of no small Force with God.

(3.) The Matter of these Prayers is such as makes them highly acceptable to God. For we can put up no Suit to God more agreeable to his Will, than that in which we beg Grace for Children: For what is this in Effect but to desire God's Name may be great among our Posterity, and that there may be a Generation to serve him when we are in our Graves?

Upon all these Considerations the Prayers of Parents for their Children ought to be a great Encouragement to Children to devote themselves to the Service of the God of their Fathers.

2dly, They have likewise the Advantage of religious Education. Good Parents will not think they have discharged all their Duty when they have prayed for their Children: They will be careful to instruct them, and to use all other good Means for their Furtherance in the Way to Heaven.

3dly, They will give their Children good Example; and how much this avails, and of what Advantage it is to Children, I have formerly shewed.

4thly, They have the Advantage of many special Promises which God hath made to the Children and Posterity of those

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those that fear him, which Promises I have also heretofore mentioned upon another Occasion, and to another purpose. God hath promised *to circumcise the Hearts of his People, and the Hearts of their Seed,* Deut. 30. 6. *To be their God and the God of their Seed after them,* Gen. 17.

7. *To pour his Spirit upon their Seed, and his Blessing upon their Off-spring,* Isai. 44.

3. So much of the Encouragement which the Children of believing and religious Parents have to consecrate themselves to God's Service.

2. They have moreover a great Engagement thereunto. The Encouragements they have to the Service of God being so great, lay a great Obligation upon them thereunto. And if notwithstanding such Encouragements, they shall neglect the Service of God, their Sin and Punishment will be so much the greater. I the rather chose to speak a little to this Point in regard of the Usefulness of it to Children that are descended from good Parents. And 'tis several Ways useful to such.

Use 1. It gives them to see what Cause they have to be thankful unto God

God for this Mercy. They might have been related to those Parents, whose wicked Lives and ungodly Example could convey nothing to them but the Curse of God; they might have had such Parents, as instead of praying for their Children would have curst them; instead of training them up in the Fear of God, would have brought them up in the Service of the Devil; who, instead of walking before them in the Way to Heaven, would by their ill Example have lead them on to Hell, and might have been wretched Patterns to them of all Manner of Wickedness and Prophaneness.

Let not the Children of good Parents undervalue this Mercy: Let them have an high Esteem of it, and ever maintain a thankful Sense and Acknowledgment thereof in their Hearts. Let them often say, *Who maketh me to differ from another?* and who am I, that I should be descended of those who are in *Covenant with God*, rather than of those who are *Strangers to the Covenant of Grace, and Aliens from the Common-Wealth of Israel!*

And though your Parents should be mean and low in the World, yet let not

not that abate your Thankfulness. 'Tis incomparably more desirable to be descended from Parents who get every Piece of Bread they eat with the Sweat of their Brows, being such as truly fear God, than from the greatest wicked and ungodly Potentate in the World.

Use 2. Let Children of religious Parents hence learn to carry themselves dutifully, humbly and obediently towards them. This is that which all Children owe unto their Parents though they be very wicked. The Wickedness of Parents doth not discharge Children from their Duty. Those Children are much mistaken who think it doth; and because their Parents are not such as they should be, take Liberty to cast off that Yoke of Subjection and Obedience which God hath laid upon their Necks, and carry themselves towards them as they list.

Though they should be supposed to be very bad Parents, yet they are Parents still, and you their Children; and as long as those Relations remain, Honour and Obedience, in all lawful things, will still remain to be your Duty.

But if those things be due from Children to the worst of Parents, how

much more due are they to good Parents! to those Parents from whom so many spiritual Advantages are conveyed upon Children! If all Children be obliged to endeavour to requite their Parents (as hath been said), the Children of good Parents have Reason to endeavour it above all others, as owing more unto them for their Prayers, good Example, holy Instructions, and vertuous Education, than for all other their Labour of Love about them, though that be great also.

Use 3. Much Cause therefore have Children of good Parents to be humbled for their Disobedience and Untractableness, their Crossness, and Soweriness, their Backwardness and Unwillingness to do them any Service; and much more for being by their Miscarriages so great a Grief to their Parents, as too often they are.

These things were just matter of Humiliation, though Parents were very bad: But for Children so to carry themselves against good Parents is intolerable; and shews, that they have no true Sense either of God's singular Goodness to them in giving them such Parents,
or

or of the great Benefits and Advantages which by their Means are conveyed unto them.

Use 4. If the Piety of Parents be both so great an Encouragement and Engagement to their Children to serve the God of their Parents, let the Children of good Parents take Notice of it, and see they carry themselves accordingly. They must know, that God expects more from them than from others. He hath not given them such Encouragements and Advantages above others to no purpose.

He looks that such Children should as far excel other Children in Piety and Religion towards God, in Dutifulness and Obedience towards their Parents, as the Means and Advantages they have thereunto are greater. What a Shame is it, that some Children who have been bred and educated in Families where there is not as much as the Face of Religion; where they have nothing but evil Examples before their Eyes every Day; where there is no Care taken to instruct them, or bring them acquainted with their Duty; where they may
live

live as they please, and be as bad as they will :

I say, what a Shame is it, that some who are bred in such Families, and under so many Disadvantages, should give better Evidence of true Piety and Religion towards God, and carry themselves more humbly and dutifully towards their Parents, than many of those who have had the greatest Advantages from the Prayers, Care and Example of their Parents to make them better !

But what shall we say to those graceless Children of good Parents, who, notwithstanding all the Advantages of their Education, run with the worst Companions they can meet with to the same Excess of Riot ; give up themselves to all Manner of Debauchery and Lewdness, hardening their Hearts against all Means for their reclaiming ? What shall we say to them ? I say,

1. These wicked Children, without timely and sound Repentance, are in the High-Way to the hottest Place in Hell : Other wicked Children continuing in their Impenitency shall be beaten with Stripes, but these shall be beaten with many Stripes. When these shall receive their Sentence at the last Day, all the

the Prayers and Tears, all the holy Admonitions and Instructions of their Parents shall rise up in Judgment against them, and add Weight and Severity to that Punishment which they shall then be adjudged unto.

2. Such wicked Children sinning thus with an high Hand against the Strength of their Education, seldom escape some severe and shameful Punishment in this World, besides what further awaits them in the other World. God may long bear with them, and let them run on without Check, but for the most part, their Sin finds them out at last, and God makes their Punishments even here in this Life as remarkable as their Provocations have been.

But let me say what I will to such ungracious Children, they will not believe me now; *Their Hearts are set in them to do Evil*, and nothing shall restrain them. They say, with the obstinate Jews, *I have loved Strangers, and after them will I go*, Jer. 2. 25. Well, let them take their Course if they be resolute; but let them know, that the Time is coming when they shall confess, they were fairly warned, and that
it

it had been happy for them if they had taken Warning.

The wild young Man, *Prov. 5.* could stop his Ears and harden his Heart against all wholesome Counsel; nothing could prevail with him to make him willing to forsake his lewd Courses (for such a one *Solomon* directs his Speech unto): But might this resolute young Man think he should always thus be able to rant it, and bear up against all that could be said or done to reform him? He might think so; but *Solomon* would have him wiser than so to deceive himself. *Hear me now therefore* (says he) *and depart not from the Words of my Mouth, lest thou mourn at last when thy Flesh and thy Body are consumed, and say, how have I hated Instruction, and my Heart despised Reproof; and have not obeyed the Voice of my Teachers, nor inclined mine Ear to them that instructed me?* *Prov. 5. 7, 11, 12, 13.*

And so much may suffice to have been spoken upon Occasion of the Description which *David* makes of the true God, when, directing his Speech to *Solomon*, he calls him, *The God of his Father.*

I come

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I come now to the Matter of the Charge, *Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him.* Where first, of the Knowledge of God.

Now, whereas *David* makes this so considerable a Part of his Charge to his Son *Solomon*, and also gives it the first Place; there are three things here observable: The Necessity, the Precedency, and the End of Knowledge.

1. Knowledge is necessary to the Service of God.

2. Knowledge must, in order, go before Service.

3. Our Knowledge must be referred to Practice as the End thereof. Of all these very briefly.

1. Knowledge is necessary to the Service of God, I mean that Service which he will accept. No Man can serve God acceptably without it.

For 1. God will be served by us as by reasonable Creatures, and therefore our Service must be a *reasonable Service*; such a Service as a good Account and Reason may be given thereof, *Rom. 12.*

1. And without Knowledge of the Grounds of our Service, such an Account can never be given. The Want
X of

of this Knowledge in the Samaritan's Worship our Saviour so far censures, as that he clearly implies, that all their Services without Knowledge signified nothing. *Ye worship ye know not what: But we know what we worship; for Salvation is of the Jews,* John 4. 22. As if he had said, your blind Services, your ignorant Worship of God, will never bring you to Heaven: If you hope to be saved, you must come over to us, and know what you worship, and how you serve God.

2. All our Service of God must be in Faith, else while we think we serve him, we sin against him and provoke him, *Rom. 14. 23. Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin.* Now Faith in that Place is nothing else but a sound Knowledge and well-grounded Perswasion of the Lawfulness of what we do. But where Darkness and Ignorance reign, there 'tis impossible God should be served from Faith:

3. All acceptable Service must be performed in Obedience to God; and that includes two things.

(1.) The Knowledge of our Duty.

(2.) An Eye at God's Command in what we do. But what we do ignorantly,

rantly, we can no more do in Obedience, than a blind Man can aim at the Mark. Though the Matter of what we do be good, and agreeable to the Will of God, yet unless we know it to be so, we cannot do it in Obedience; As a Servant cannot be said to obey his Master unless he know that he doth what his Master hath commanded him, and therefore do it because he is commanded.

If here Enquiry be made whence this Knowledge is to be had; I answer, It is to be learnt principally from the Scriptures: For the Light of Nature since the Fall, is very short of being able sufficiently to inform us.

1. As for moral Duties, and the Notions of Good and Evil, the Remainders of the Light of Nature since the Fall, do in part inform us concerning such things, and yet but in part; for even in these things the Light of Nature since the Fall, is a weak, imperfect Light, which, if we in all things follow, we shall often be in Danger to be misled.

2. As for Matters that are purely of Faith, as the Doctrine of the Trinity, the Union of the Divine and hu-

mane Nature in the Person of Christ,
 the Way of Salvation by the Death of
 the Son of God, and the like; these are
 things, which Reason could never have
 found out, unless God had been pleased
 in the Scriptures to reveal them. Yea
 they being in Scripture revealed, natu-
 ral Reason still rejects them, and closeth
 the Eye against them further than
 God is pleased to open our Understand-
 ing to admit of them and receive them;
 as he *opened the Understanding* of the
 two Disciples, *Luke 24. 45.* and as he
Opened the Heart of Lydia, *Acts 16.*
14. The natural Man receiveth not the
things of the Spirit of God, for they are
Foolishness unto him; neither can he know
them, because they are spiritually discern-
ed, *1 Cor. 2. 14.* Hence it is, that the
 Scriptures speak of it and represent it as
 a singular Privilege to be enabled to
 understand spiritual things. *To you 'tis*
given to know the Mysteries of the King-
dom of Heaven, but to them, to others,
'tis not given, *Matth. 13. 11.* *Blessed are*
your Eyes for they see, and your Ears for
they hear, *Ver. 16.* And, *I thank thee,*
O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth,
because thou hast hid these things from
the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed
them

them unto Babes. Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy Sight, Matth. 11. 26. there being in our Understandings a great deal of Darkness as well as some little Light, Error as well as Truth, false Principles and Notions of things as well as true. The Scripture constantly describes the State of Man by Nature as a State of Darkness, and Ignorance, under which he is held until such time as God be pleased to enlighten him; *We were sometimes Darkness, but now are ye Light in the Lord*, Eph. 5. 8. And *God hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son*, Col. 1. 13.

Thus we have briefly seen the Necessity of Knowledge to enable us to serve God acceptably; which yet must not be so understood as if the same Measure of Knowledge were required of all.

1. Some are of weaker Capacities, and as God hath given less to them; so he requires less of them.

2. Others have less Means of Knowledge; God, by his Providence, having cast them into those Places where they have not those Advantages of Teaching and Instruction which others are privileged with.

3. Others have less Time and Leisure to imploy themselves in searching after Knowledge; whereas some have so much Time and Leisure as they seem to be burthened with it, not well knowing how to spend it. In all which Cases God mercifully considers the Circumstances in which every Man is set, and accordingly expects more or less from him. They therefore who have less Capacity, Means, and Leisure, need not anxiously disquiet and afflict themselves that they cannot attain the same Measure of Knowledge which many others have attained, so long as they do their best Endeavour to attain some competent measure of Knowledge, and are conscientious in the Practice of what they know.

Use 1. Let us then account it a great Mercy that we have Means of Knowledge. That in our younger Years we had the Benefit of sucking in the Principles of Religion; that God was pleased to give our Parents Ability and Willingness to teach us our Duty, and to acquaint us with the Way to Heaven: That afterwards God hath been pleased so to dispose of us as we have still enjoyed other Means of improving our Knowledge; That we live where

we have the Scriptures of Truth ; we might have had nothing but the *Turkish* Alkoran, that Bundle of Lies and Fables: That the Scriptures are afforded us in our Mother-Tongue, where we may freely have Recourse for the Knowledge of our Duty as often as we please ; whereas it might have been a sealed Book, or lock'd up from us in an unknown Tongue, as in a very great Part of the Christian World still it is.

That besides private Advantages we have the Benefit of publick Ordinances, whereas God might have cast us into some dark Place, where we might have had none of these Advantages for furthering the Salvation of our Souls. Let us take heed we do not undervalue our Mercies. We read how emphatically our Saviour speaks of the greatness of this Mercy. *Blessed are your Eyes, for they see ; and your Ears, for they hear. Verily, I say unto you, that many Prophets and righteous Men have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them ; and to hear the things that ye hear, and have not heard them, Matth. 13. 16, 17.* God complains of the *Israelites, That they understood not his Wonders in Egypt, Psal. 106.*

7. Let it not be said of us, that we understand not our Mercies.

Use 2. Let us be still improving our Knowledge. 'Tis but an Argument and a Fruit of our Ignorance if we think we know enough already. 'Twill be still our Duty as long as we live, to grow in the Knowledge of Christ, as well as in Grace, as the Apostle Peter exhorts, 2 Pet. 3. 18. For after our highest Attainments here, we shall know but in Part, and understand but as Children; we shall see but imperfectly and darkly, as it were through a Glass, 1 Cor. 13. 9, 11, 12. Yea, let me add, the more we grow in Knowledge, the more shall we discern our Ignorance. There is no more sure Evidence of a very ignorant Person, than if he have an high Conceit of his Knowledge. *If any Man think he knows any thing, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know, 1 Cor 8. 2.* And this Opinion of a Man's Knowledge is not only an Argument of Ignorance, but one of the greatest Hindrances and Obstructions of sound Knowledge. *Seest thou a Man wise in his own Conceit? saith Solomon, there is more Hopes of a Fool than of him, Prov. 26. 12.*

So much of the Necessity of Knowledge. I come now to the next thing, The Order, or Precedency of Knowledge: Our Knowledge must go before Action; first the Knowledge of God, and then the Service of God. I shall not need to spend much Time in the Proof of this. The Understanding is the Eye of the Soul, without which chusing out our Way for us, *We walk in the Dark, and we know not whither we go*, as our Saviour speaks, *John 12. 25.* We are not aware upon what Dangers and Hazards we run our selves. The Scriptures mind us of *taking heed to our Ways*, *Psal. 119. 9.* and *pondering the Path of our Feet*, *Prov. 4. 25, 26.* and *looking right on before us*, that we may not turn aside out of the right Way. How solicitous *David* was, to understand his Way, and to be guided aright, we may gather from those many earnest Prayers which he puts up to God, that he would be pleased to teach him, and guide him, and lead him. *Lead me, O Lord, in thy Righteousness*, *Psal 5. 8.* *For thy Name Sake lead me and guide me*, *Psal. 31. 3.* *Lead me in the Way everlasting*, *Psal. 139. 24.* *Shew me thy Ways, O Lord, teach me thy Paths: Lead me in thy*

thy Truth, and teach me, Psal. 25. 56. Teach me thy Way, O Lord, lead me in a plain Path because of mine Enemies, Psal. 27. 11. If a Person so eminently illuminated was so extreamly solicitous about understanding and chusing out his Way, how much more doth it concern us to ponder all our Paths, and consider thoroughly of our Ways, lest we run on headlong upon those things which we may have too much Cause to repent us of afterwards, when what is done cannot be undone! And this brings me to the Application.

Use 1. This may condemn our Rashness and Precipitancy in many Passages of our Lives. We rush upon Sin, as the Horse rusheth into the Battle; as the Prophet speaks, Jer. 8. 6. we act heedlessly and inconsiderately; and thereby involve our selves in much Guilt, which with timely and due Consideration might easily have been avoided.

Neither is this the worst of our Case: Our further Misery is, that when we are engaged in Sin we cannot retreat; one Sin draws on another. How much Sin and Sorrow might we prevent if we ever took a deliberate View of our Ways, and pondered our Paths before

fore we adventured to go forward. The unreasonable Creatures are for the most Part more wary: You shall hardly force them to venture into a deep River, or over a narrow Bridge, or through an unsound and rotten Ground, or a dangerous Bog: All the Violence you can offer will hardly prevail to make them run upon foreseen Danger; unless where a furious Generousness makes them regardless of all Danger, as when at the Sound of the Trumpet the Horse's Spirits are so raised, that *he mocketh at Fear, and turns not back from the Sword, the Quiver that rattles against him, the glittering Spear and the Shield,* as 'tis Excellently set forth, *Job 39. 21, 22, 23.* But alas, Man hath a Foolhardiness that hurries him on without Reluctancy upon his Souls Ruine: You need not force him, or offer Violence to him, he'll force himself, and offer Violence to his own Conscience rather than fail.

Use 2. Let us then labour in the whole Course of our Lives, and especially in all Matters of Moment and Concernment, to act rationally, as Men and Christians: Let our Guide go first,

first, and search out our Way ; let Reason go before us and steer our Course ; let us ever labour for clear Satisfaction before we act. 'Tis an excellent Rule which the Apostle gives us : *Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own Mind,* Rom. 14. 5. Are there Doubtings and Dissatisfactions touching the Lawfulness of any thing you are about to do ? Are you wavering, fluctuating and irresolved ? Now of one mind, and anon of another ? Take heed you venture not on before your Way be cleared : Remember what the Apostle saith, *Blessed is he who condemns not himself in the thing that he alloweth,* Rom. 14. 22. whose Heart reproacheth him not ; and whose Conscience doth not secretly whisper in his Ear while he is acting, or soon after, that this or that ought not to have been done. And that you may not by your Heedlessness and Inconsideration make Work for after-Trouble and Regret,

1. Know when your greatest Danger is ; and that is, when either you have an eager Desire from within, or are strongly solicited from without, to do that which you are not clearly satisfied may be done. In these two Cases you will

will be apt to smother the Gain-sayings of your Conscience, and to run on through thick and thin, not minding what lies in your Way to hinder you.

2. In this dangerous Case, be sure you take time enough; time to take into mature Consideration whatever your Conscience hath to object to the contrary. Give Conscience leave to plead, and produce its Reasons; let her not be snubb'd, but have free Liberty to speak out, to utter all that she hath to say, and let all her Allegations have their full Weight: Take time to consult with the Word, and to look up to God for Direction. And if he should not presently answer, but see good to hold you in Suspence, be not hasty to go on without him; take time to wait for his Answers, and resolve, you will do nothing without him.

3. In all doubtful Cases, where, after all Means used for your Satisfaction, you are still in a Wood, and cannot come to attain any full and clear Light to guide you, be sure to take the safest Side; that in which you shall be sure not to sin against God, whatever Advantages may be propounded to tempt you over to the other side. For be
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you assured of it, that no Advantage can be so great, as to countervail the Loss of the Sense of God's Favour, and the Peace of your Conscience.

Now follows the third thing, The End of Knowledge: Our Knowledge must be referred to Practice.

This we should still aim at in our Pursuit of Knowledge. *Hear, O Israel, the Statutes and Judgments which I speak in your Ears this Day, that ye may learn them, and keep them, and do them, Deut. 5. 1.* This was David's End in begging Knowledge of God: *Teach me thy Ways, O Lord, and I will walk in thy Truth, Psal. 86. 11. Give me Understanding and I shall keep thy Law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole Heart, Psal. 119. 34.*

Knowledge indeed is an excellent thing, as being a principal Part of the Image of God at first imprinted on the Soul of Man: But the Excellency of it lies most in this, that 'tis our Guide to lead us in the Way of Holiness, and consequently in the Way of Life. The Excellency of Knowledge is, that *Wisdom giveth Life to them that have it, Eccles. 7. 12.*

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Knowledge without Practice will never make us happy; yea, will aggravate our Sin and Punishment.

1. It will never make us happy. Our Happiness consists not in our Knowledge, but in our conscientious Practice of what we know. We never find in Scripture, that Men are pronounced happy meerly upon Account of their Knowledge, how great soever, if there be not an answerable Care of walking accordingly. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them, John 13. 37. Whoso looketh into the perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful Hearer, but a Doer of the Work, that Man shall be blessed in his Deeds, Jam. 1. 25.* If a Man had the Knowledge of an Angel, without Obedience it will do him no Good.

2. It would aggravate both his Sin and Punishment, and render his Condition so much the worse. *If you were blind you should have no Sin*, said Christ to the Pharisees, who had a great Opinion of their Knowledge, *John 9. 41.* that is, they should have had no Sin comparatively; none to what now they had, sinning against so much Light. So again, to the same Purpose,
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John 15. 22. If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin. Their Ignorance would have been some Excuse, but now knowing their Duty, and yet neglecting it, they have nothing to alledge for themselves whereby their Sin might have been lessened.

That for the Aggravation of Sin from our Knowledge: And Sin being aggravated, it follows, that Punishment must also; for that is to be proportionable to the Sin. *The Servant who knoweth his Masters Will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many Stripes, Luk. 12. 47.*

The Light of the Gospel is an unspeakable Mercy in it self considered; but being not improved, but neglected and slighted, it makes Way, by Means of our Sin, for a sorer Punishment. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darkness rather than Light, John 3. 19. This is the Condemnation, that is, this is the heaviest and the most dreadful Condemnation; so that the Condition of others, unto whom this Light was never afforded, shall be much more easie and tolerable. Thus our Saviour threatned Chorazin, and Bethsaida, and*
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Capernaum, that it should be more tolerable for *Tyre and Sidon*, and for the Land of *Sodom* in the Day of Judgment, than for them, in Regard of the great Light they enjoyed by the Preaching of Christ, and the Advantage of his Miracles wrought amongst them for the Confirmation of the Truth of the Doctrine which he preached, *Matth. 11. 21, 22, 23, 24.*

To apply what hath been spoken.

Use 1. This may shew us what the things are which we should most desire to know, and the Knowledge of which we should most prize and value: and they are the things which concern our Duty; or some way or other are referable thereunto.

'Tis an Argument of the Vanity of our Minds, and of the small Regard we have of bettering our Lives, and ordering our Conversation according to the Rule, that we most earnestly pry into and listen after those things which least concern us, and which are never likely to be of any Use to us in relation to our Practice.

These things are most welcome to us, and we are never weary of them; but

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as for the Matters of our Duty, and what may regulate our Practice, these are the things which we are soon cloyed with, and seem dry and sapless to us.

But this is a very ill Temper, and argues a very unhealthy Constitution of the Soul; as it argues an unsound and distempered Body, when wholesome Meats, and such things as would do us most Good, are loathed; and things affording little or no Nourishment, or no wholesome Nourishment suitable to our present Constitution and Habit of Body, are most eagerly desired.

Reflect upon your self, and ask your Soul, how 'tis with you in this Matter. Doth nothing please you better in what you hear or read, than what acquaints you with or reminds you of your Duty, and quickens you to it? Or, are these the things which you take least Content in? And are you apt to say of Discourses of this Nature, what a Weariness are they? As you find your Desires and Affections, your Gust and Relish are as to these things, such is the present State and Constitution of your Soul, sound or unsound, healthy or crazy.

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Use 2. This also shews what kind of Knowledge we should desire; not a meer Speculative, but a practical or operative Knowledge. A Knowledge, that doth not swim in the Brain, but sink down into the Heart, and hath thence an Influence on the Life and Conversation; a Knowledge, that transforms and changes the whole Man, and works in it a Conformity to the Will of God. Other Knowledge is empty, barren, and fruitless as to the Person in whom it is; and though being communicated it may prove beneficial to others, yet will it never be of any saving Advantage to him who hath no Care to order his Conversation by it, and reduce it to Practice.

Use 3. And hence we may infer, how little Reason any Man hath, to be proud of his Knowledge, who doth not lead his Life agreeably thereunto. The more unsanctified Knowledge any Man hath, the more he is like the Devil, who excels in Knowledge as well as in Wickedness. And should a Man be proud of that Knowledge which, being severed from good Conscience, will only help to render him the more miserable in

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another World, and so more like the Devil in Punishment also?

Use 4. Let us then be exhorted to practise what we know, or shall at any time come to know concerning our Duty. Else the more we grow in Knowledge, the greater will our future Torments be: And in this Sense, that is most true which *Solomon* saith to another Purpose, *Eccles. 1. 18. He that increaseth Knowledge, increaseth Sorrow.*

You come hither to hear from time to time, and in this Place an Hour is spent: But is your Coming hither to any purpose? Doth it really promote your Obedience? Are you thereby rendred the more conscientious in the Practice of every known Duty? Or, is the only Effect of this Ordinance upon the Understanding, to enlighten and inform that; while the Heart, the Will and Affections, and the Conversation still continue the same, no gracious Change being wrought upon them?

If this be all, the time will come when, without a further Change upon the Heart and Life, you will wish you had known less, yea, that you had been the most weak and ignorant Creature in

in the World, rather than that your Knowledge of those Duties which you will not practise, should add Weight to your Punishment, and bring upon you the heavier Condemnation.

To prevent this Misery, let me recommend these three things to you.

I. Before you come to hear, take a little Pains with your Hearts, and labour so to prepare them for Hearing, as that you may come with full Resolution to practise whatsoever you shall be convinc'd of to be your Duty, though it should be most contrary to your sinful Inclinations.

Such fresh Resolutions lying warm upon the Heart when you come to hear, would much further you in the Practice of whatsoever Duties should, out of God's Word, be recommended to you.

But alas ! how few are they that are willing to be at this Trouble with their Hearts? Or, if there be found a Person here and there that doth it sometimes, yet where is that Person to be found that doth it constantly ? who never comes to hear but with renewed Resolutions of practising whatsoever shall appear to be required of him.² How

many come hither resolved to go on in their evil Ways, and in the Neglect of their Duty, notwithstanding any thing which they may hear to the contrary? Who say in their Hearts as those in the Prophet, *As for the Word that is spoken to us, we will not hearken to it; but we will certainly do whatsoever goeth forth out of our own Mouth; as we have done,* Jer. 44. 16, 17.

2. While you are attending to the Word, let your chief Care be to observe and remember what may concern your own Practice, that you may go away better informed touching your Duty, and more fully resolved to perform it. Many earnestly listen after that by which their Ears may be tickled, and their Fancies gratified; others that whereby their Understandings may be informed, and that they may meet with new things that they had not taken Notice of before; others again, are very attentive to hear the Sins of others discovered, and their Neglect of their Duty condemned and censured: But how small is the Number of those who come to have their own Sins laid open, that they may forsake them; their Duties set before them, that they may pra-
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use them; that their Hearts may be bettered, and their Lives amended?

By this Means it comes to pass, that the Hearers lose and pass over that which did most nearly concern them, and mostly observe and take hold of those things which are of least Advantage or Concernment to them.

Thus is the great End of their Hearing lost, and they come away from God's Ordinance nothing the better for it, or rather, it may be, much the worse, while they find a Way to make Use of something which may help to add Fewel to their Corruptions, but never take Notice or make Application of any thing to themselves that might conduce to the Mortifying of them.

3. After Hearing, apply your self immediately to put in Practice what you have understood to be your Duty. Thus *David* professeth it to have been his Care to yield unto God speedy Obedience: *I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandments*, Psal. 119. 60. And 'tis observable, that *Abraham*, having a Command from God for sacrificing his Son, *He arose early in the Morning* (the very next Morning, as the Text seems to imply) and addressed
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himself to the Performance of what God had enjoined him, *Gen. 22. 3.* Another Example hereof we have in *St. Paul*, who, as soon as God had called him by his Grace, and revealed his Son in him, that he might preach Him among the *Heathen*, immediately he conferred not with *Flesh and Blood*, but betook himself to the Work which God had called him unto, *Gal. 1. 15, 16.* And this speedy and immediate applying ourselves to the doing of what God hath commanded, as soon as we are convinced of our Duty, and moved to perform it, is of very great Advantage to us in sundry Respects.

For 1. Our Hearts are then warm, and our Affections are stirred, so as we can the more readily and willingly set about what is required of us: But if we delay and put off the Doing of it but for a little while, our Hearts and Affections are cool'd, and now we have no Mind at all to that which we could have done with much Zeal and Fervour, if we had taken the Opportunity of the present Warmth of our Hearts, and of those Impressions which the Word of God had just then made upon them.

2. The deferring of it gives carnal Reason and fleshly Wisdom Time and Oppor-

Opportunity to interpose and suggest Arguments against the Discharge of our Duty.

3. The Devil also hath time to assault us within, and to offer something that may hinder us; or to cast some Rub, or present some Lion or other in our Way without.

4. Friends and Relations will sometimes dissuade us and take us off from our Duty upon one Consideration or other; therein, possibly, doing Satan's Work, and being acted by him as his Instruments; So St. Peter dissuaded Christ from suffering, *Matth. 16. 23.*

5. Sometimes by putting off a Duty, we wholly lose the Opportunity thereof, which can never be recalled.

How often do we come from the Ordinances of God with strong and warm Resolutions to set upon the Practice of some Duty that hath been formerly neglected by us, but putting it off for the present, we afterwards never seriously mind it any more!

You have, it may be, sometimes been so moved and affected by the Word, that you have gone home with Resolutions to set up Prayer in your Family; to instruct your Children and

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Servants; to spend your time better at home on the Lord's-Day for those Hours in which your Attendance on the publick Ordinances is not required; to decline those Occasions of Sin, and keep out of the Way of those Temptations that have drawn you into sinful Excesses and Exorbitancies; to make Restitution presently where your Conscience hath told you, that you have wronged any Man; to expend and lay out something towards the Relief of some whose Necessities have been known unto you; to carry your self more peaceably and quietly in your Family; to give better Example to those that are about you; to be more careful to keep a good Conscience in all your Dealings; for ever to lay aside and quit all unlawful Ways of Gain and Advantage to your Estate, and the like.

These, I say, have been your Resolutions when you came warm from hearing the Word, but that present Season for beginning to amend and reform being neglected, you still go on in your old Course, and are likely so to do as long as you live, unless you make more haste to put your good Resolutions in Execution before your present warm

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Affections cool, die, and vanish away. Let me desire you who are concerned in what I have now spoken, to consider but two or three things, to the End you may not always be thus putting off God, and deceiving your own Souls, by your Delays and Procrastinations.

1st, Your good Affections and Resolutions at Sermons, if still you go on to neglect your Duty, will be so many Witnesses against you hereafter; and they will be such Witnesses as will most appal and affright you. How will you be able to hold up your Head, or to open your Mouth to speak one Word for your self, who have been so often convinc'd of your Duty, and so effectually moved and stirred up to the Practice of it, that you have taken up Resolutions of speedy Amendment, and yet have still persevered and gone on in the Way of your own Heart as formerly?

2^{dly}, You have no Reason to expect, that God should still proceed to follow you with new Convictions, and inward Motions, to provoke you to do your Duty: You may justly fear lest your Delays make him at last resolve, His Spirit shall no more strive with you, but

but rather give you up to Hardness of Heart and final Impenitency.

3dly, If you could but once set upon the Performance of your Duty, and were but engaged in it, much of the Difficulty would be over, and you would go on with Ease and Delight.

For (1.) You would presently perceive, that all those things which now keep you off from your Duty, are but either meer Bugbears which Satan casts in your Way to affright you and scare you off; or such sinful Baits and deceitful Allurements, by which he deludes and cheats you, to take you off from those Ways which he knows would be most safe and comfortable to you.

(2.) You would find that Sweetness, Content and Satisfaction in the Ways of Duty and Obedience, as would carry you on, and not suffer you easily to be turned away from them any more. And so I have done with this Use.

Use 5. Let none then be discouraged at their Weakness and the Meanness of their Knowledge, so long as they make Conscience of practising that little which they know; and so long as they bewail their Ignorance, and are

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still pressing forward after further Measures of Knowledge.

1. Though Knowledge be greatly desirable, and a Competency of it necessary, yet if the Comparison be made between Knowledge and conscientious Practice, a Dram of good Conscience engaging us to the Practice of what we know, be it more or less, is worth a Pound of Knowledge without Practice. A small Measure of Knowledge, attended with answerable Obedience, will bring a Man to Heaven, if natural Capacity or Means of greater Knowledge be wanting; and the highest Measures of Knowledge without Obedience will only serve as a Light to conduct a Man to Hell.

2. A Care to practise according to that small Measure of Knowledge we have attained, is the best Way to get more Knowledge. God delights to be still teaching and further enlightening those, who make Conscience of framing their Lives according to that Light which they have attained. *If any Man will do the Will of God, he shall know it,* John 7. 17. But where Men retain the Truth in Unrighteousness, and go on in Ways of Sin against their Knowledge and

and Convictions, 'tis very just and usual with God to take away that Light which they made no better Use of, and to give them up to a Spirit of Error, and to send them strong Delusions, that they may believe Lies, as he hath dealt with those of the Church of Rome, and many among our selves. And so much of the former Duty, the Knowledge of God.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

I Now proceed to the latter Duty, the Service of God; of which I shall speak the less, because in what I last insisted on, touching the End of Knowledge,

ledge, I have in part prevented my self in what otherwise I might here have handled. Now the Service of God may be taken two Ways, strickly or largely.

1. Strictly for the Performance of those Duties of Divine Worship, in which we more immediately and directly honour and serve him; such as are the Duties of Prayer, hearing the Word, receiving the Sacraments, and indeed all the Duties of the first Table, comprehending all that inward and outward Worship and Service which is due to God from us: Thus often is the Word taken in Scripture. So *Psal. 100. 2. Serve the Lord with Gladness, come before his Presence with singing*: Where, by serving the Lord, we are to understand his publick Worship; as we may gather from what follows, of coming before his Presence with singing. So also, *Exod. 3. 12.* God speaking to *Moses*, saith, *When thou hast brought forth the People out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this Mountain*; that is, Ye shall offer Sacrifice to him. In the same Sense again, *Chap. 4. 23.* God saith to *Pharoah*, *Let my People go, that they may serve Me.* And

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Chap. 10. 26. Moses speaking unto Pharoah, saith, Our Cattel also shall go with us, there shall not an Hoof be left behind us; for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God: that is still, to offer Sacrifice unto him. And in the same Signification is the Word used when Speech is made of the Worship of false Gods, *Exod. 5. 9. Thou shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them.* And *Psal. 97. 7. Confounded be all they that serve graven Images; that boast themselves of Idols; worship him all ye Gods.*

2. The Service of God in Scripture is sometimes taken more largely, and that more frequently, for the Performance of all that Service and Obedience which God hath enjoined us, and so it comprehends the Duties of the second Table as well as those of the first. So *Luke 1. 74. We are by Christ delivered out of the Hands of our Enemies, that we might serve God in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Lives.* And *Matth. 6. 24. No Man can serve two Masters; ye cannot serve God and Mammon. If any Man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall my Servant be: If any Man serve me, him will*

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my Father honour, John 12. 26. We are delivered from the Law, that we should serve God in Newness of Spirit, and not in the Oldness of the Letter, Rom. 7. 6.

And in this larger Sense, 'tis every where used in the old Testament. And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his Ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul, Deut. 10. 12. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness and Gladness of Heart for the Abundance of all things; therefore shalt thou serve thine Enemies, Deut. 28. 47, 48. If ye will fear the Lord, and serve him, and obey his Voice, and not rebel against the Commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the King that reigns over you, continue following the Lord your God, 1 Sam. 12. 14. And thus in the Text, Know thou the God of thy Fathers, and serve him; that is, be obedient to him in all things.

So then the Service of God in this Place is a most comprehensive Word, taking in our whole Duty toward God and Man, and 'tis in Effect no other thus to serve God, than herein to exer-

rise our selves to have always a Conscience void of Offence toward God, and toward Men, as the Apostle professeth concerning himself, *Acts 24. 16.* 'Tis with David, to have Respect to all God's Commandments, *Psal. 119. 6.* To walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, *Coloss. 1. 10.* that is, worthy of, or suitable to, our Relation to him, so as to desire, intend, and endeavour in all things to please him; for that's the Import of that Phrase, *ἵνα πάντως ἀποκρίνηται συνάντηόντες*, to walk unto all pleasing.

And this is that which is agreeable unto the Condition and Relation of a Servant, who must not pick and chuse, but give up himself to the Will and Commands of his Master in all things, so far as his Power over him reacheth. Now God having an absolute and unlimited Power over us, and it being impossible that any of his Commands should be unjust or unreasonable, or controlable by any higher Power, universal Obedience is indispensably required of us.

And indeed the Servant that takes Liberty to cross his Masters Commands in one thing, may as well do it

in another, in a third, in every thing as well as in any thing.

Yea, St. *James* tells us, that he who violates or breaks one Command of God, breaks all, *Jam. 2. 10. Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all*; the Reason is, because in the Breach of any one Law, the same Authority is slighted and violated by which all the Laws were made and established,

He therefore who will approve himself to be the Servant of God, must make Conscience of every Duty that hath upon it the Stamp and Impression, and the Authority of his Master in Heaven: Of Duties of the first Table as well as of Duties of the Second; of Duties of the second Table, as well as of those of the first; of difficult Duties, as well as of easie Duties; of hazardous Duties, as well as of Duties that are safe: Of Duties from which he is most averse, as well as of those which he can more willingly close with; of Duties which may expose him to the Censures, ill-Will, and Reproach of the World, as well as of those Duties which are in better Repute, and may meet with so much Kind-

Kindness from the World as to be generally commended and applauded.

To speak a little to every of these severally, in Order as I have mentioned them.

I. He must make Conscience of the Duties of the first Table as well as of those of the Second. There are who cannot be charged with any notorious Offence or Miscarriage against their Neighbours, and yet are guilty of the gross Neglect of Prayer, hearing the Word, receiving the Sacraments, and other Duties of God's Worship: though the same Authority by which we are required to carry our selves justly and charitably towards our Neighbours, hath also enjoined and imposed on us those other Duties of the first Table; so that a good Conscience will no more dispense with it self for the Neglect of the one than of the other. Yea, in several Respects our chiefest Care is required in performing of the Duties of the first Table, so far ought we to be from neglecting or slighting them in the least. Which, that we may the better discern, and be convinc'd of, let us consider,

(1.) That God hath given those Duties of his Worship the first Place in the Ten Commandments; and after them follow the Duties which we owe to Man. Which Order is, no doubt therefore observed, to let us understand in what Esteem we ought to have those Duties, and how careful we should be, that we do neither wholly omit them nor slightly perform them.

(2.) The Duties of the first Table we owe unto God immediately; but the immediate Object of those of the second Table is Man. Wherefore it stands with Reason, that if we allow not our selves in the Neglect of the Duties we owe to our Neighbour, much less should we allow our selves the Neglect of those Duties that immediately respect God himself.

Though our Neighbour must not be neglected in the second Place, yet our first and highest Care must be to perform the Duties we owe unto God immediately.

If you were a Servant to some great Man, who enjoined you some thing that concerned his own Person, and other things that concerned some of your fellow Servants, would you not

think you self obliged in the first Place to look to it, that you carefully performed what Services concern your Masters own Person, and then afterwards in their due Place, such as concerned your Fellow-Servants?

(1.) You can never perform your Duty to your Neighbour in a due Manner, unless first you make Conscience of your Duty towards God. The Reason is, because you must demean your self justly and charitably towards Men for God's Sake, and in Obedience to him.

And how can that be done by him who makes no Conscience of performing those Duties which he owes to God directly and immediately?

How can he love his Neighbour, and out of Love to him perform the Duties he owes him for God's Sake, who doth not love God first? and declare his Love of him by keeping his Commandments, and especially those of the first Table, that concern his more immediate Worship and Service?

2. He must make Conscience of the Duties of the second Table as well as of the Duties of the first. There are ma-

ny who place all Religion in the Duties of the first Table; they seem to make Conscience of Prayer, hearing the Word and other Parts of God's Worship; but in the mean while, they make no Conscience at all of their Duty towards Men; they are so unjust in their Dealings, as a Man might expect more Equity from those who make no Profession of Religion, than from them; and so censorious, bitter and uncharitable in their Language, as a Man might rather wish to fall under the Scourge of any Tongue almost than of theirs; and so for other things appertaining to the second Table.

But there are two or three things which these Men should do well to consider.

(1.) That while they make no Conscience of their Duty towards Man, they thereby give too just Cause of Fear and Suspicion, that the Duties of God's Worship are not performed by them with that Sincerity which God requires. For Sincerity would make them endeavour the Performance of their whole Duty to God and Man. 'Tis the Nature of that Grace to dispose the Heart

to aim at universal Obedience. 'Tis one of the most dangerous Signs of an Hypocrite to pick out and take up some Duties, and to pass over and lay aside others.

(2.) 'Tis a great and foul Reproach to Religion, that any who make greatest Profession of Zeal for God's Honour, and lay most stress upon the Duties of the first Table; who hear constantly, repeat Sermons, pray in their Families, spend the Lord's Day better than many others; should yet be more regardless and unconscientious in the things that respect their Neighbours, than many of those who make far less Profession of Zeal for the Duties of the first Table.

'Tis a most shameful thing that ever it should be truly said, concerning any that profess Religion, that a Man had better deal with any Persons than with them; that a Man may expect more Truth, down-right Honesty and Plainness, more Justice and Equity from many who are openly loose and prophane in their Lives, than from those who pretend to greatest Strictness.

(3.) The more conscientious any Man would seem to be in the Duties of the first Table, the more strict and conscientious

scientious is that Man obliged to be in the Duties of the second Table, unless he will proclaim himself to be an Hypocrite.

For by his Zeal for, and conscientious Attendance on the Duties of the first Table, he gives the World just Cause to expect also from him more Justice and Equity, more Plainness and Uprightness, more Truth and Sincerity in all his Words and Actions, than from other Men: and if he shall not in some measure answer their Expectation; if they shall observe less Justice and Equity, less Plainness and Uprightness, less Truth and Sincerity, than in other Men, can he blame any but himself, if Men question the Integrity of his Heart in those Duties of God's Worship which he seems to be most zealous for?

The *Philosopher* commending the Emperour *Nero* for his Government of himself and of his Empire for some time after he first took the Supream Power upon him, and proposing him as an Example to himself, for the future Managing of his Government, saith to him, *Ingens tibi onus imposuisti Cæsar, ut nemo extra te exemplar quærat*; 'Thou hast laid a great Task upon thy self, *Cæsar*,
to

The Ninth Sermon.

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to be as Good still as thou hast begun to be, that none may need to seek a Pattern for Imitation without thy self. The same may I say to every one that makes a stricter Profession of Religion, and makes shew of greater Conscience than others in the Duties of God's Worship, You have laid a great Task upon your self, for you have thereby publickly ingaged your self to as much Strictness and Exactness in the Duties of the second Table, and 'tis that which all Men may justly expect from you.

And truly, Men will take Liberty to judge of the Truth and Sincerity of your Profession of Religion toward God by the Conscience you make of your Duty towards Men, and you cannot help it.

They will do it, did I say, yea, they may warrantly do it; for as small Account as some may make of the Duties of the second Table, God is pleased to make our Conscience of practising these Duties of the second Table, the Touchstone and Trial of the Truth of our Religion. *Pure Religion and undesfiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from*

from the World, Jam. 1. 27. And some of these are the things which our Saviour reckons among the weightier Matters of the Law, Matth. 23. 23. Ye pay Tithe of Mint and Annise and Cummin, saith he, to the Scribes and Pharisees, and ye have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law.

And what are those weightier Matters? You have them in the next Words; *Judgment, Mercy and Faith*: *Judgment*, i. e. just and righteous Dealing between Man and Man; *Mercy*, i. e. shewing Pity and Compassion towards those that are in Misery, and relieving them according to our Abilities, as Occasion is offered; and *Faith*, that is in this Place, Truth and Fidelity in performing our Oaths and Promises: these are in our Saviour's Account some of the weightier Matters of the Law, and yet are all of them Duties of the second Table.

(4.) The Sins committed against the Duties of this Table will shut a Man out of Heaven without Repentance, how strict soever he may seem to be in the Duties of the first Table. *You wrong and defraud your Brethren, saith the Apostle to the Church at Corinth; Know ye*

ye not, that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? 1 Cor. 6. 8, 9. Lord, Who shall abide in thy Tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy Hill, saith David, that is in effect, who shall go to Heaven? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his Heart; he that backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor doth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour; all Duties of the second Table, Psal. 15. 1, 2, 3.

Let no Man therefore deceive himself in a vain Conceit, that his Care to perform the Duties of the first Table shall procure for him a Dispensation for his Sins against the second Table: let such a one know, that they will rather come in as so many great Aggravations of his Sins against the second Table, that were committed against so great a Shew and Profession of Religion held forth in the Performance of those Duties of the first Table.

Here, perhaps, it may be said, Though this may be granted to be true, yet what's all this to the Purpose? What's this to the Service of God, which was the thing in the Text?

Though

Though what I have before spoken might be sufficient to take off this Objection, yet I shall speak a little more to it here. If we restrain the Service of God to the Duties of his Worship, we shall straiten it too much: Men serve God in their Callings as well as when they pray or sing Psalms. The due Performance of the Duties we owe unto our Neighbour, are an acceptable Service unto God, if done ^{as} unto God, and in Obedience to his Commands.

So the Magistrate serves God in the faithful Discharge of the Duties of his Office, doing Judgment, and executing Justice, punishing Offenders, and protecting the innocent, as well as the Minister when he prays or preaches: The Tradesman in his Shop, and the meanest Artificer in his Employment, if he do whatsoever he doth faithfully, as unto God and not unto Men; if he seek not meerly his own things, but the Glory of God, and the common Good, he serves God in his Place, and shall not fail to receive from God the Reward of those Services, how inconsiderable soever they may seem to be.

So the Apostle encourageth Servants, even the lowest and the meanest of them,

to

to be diligent and faithful in Discharge of their Duties to their Masters; Servants obey in all things your Masters according to the Flesh; not with Eye-Servance as Men-pleasers, but in Singleness of Heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord and not unto Men: knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the Reward of the Inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ, Col. 3. 22, 23, 24. The Reward of the Inheritance; What's that? the same, no doubt, which Chap. 1. 12. he calls *The Inheritance of the Saints in Light.*

3. He that will approve himself to be the Servant of God, must be willing to undertake difficult Services as well as such as are more easie. For in hard Services, the Obedience and Faithfulness of a Servant is best seen. He must be a very bad Servant, that will stick at easie things. And God is wont to try the Obedience of his Servants with some difficult Commands, such as was that to *Abraham*, for sacrificing his Son, *Gen. 22.* But in such Cases, the greater Difficulty there is in the Work we do, the greater Acceptance it hath with God, and the greater Re-

Reward we may expect from him. Besides, it is an Honour to be employed in difficult Services; and the more difficult any Service is which God employs us in, the more honourable is the Service.

4. He must be willing to be employed in hazardous Services as well as in those that are more safe. Our Faithfulness to God will sometimes endanger us; unless we will shamefully desert our Station, and run away from our Master. We must therefore resolve, that while we are engaged in that Service which God calls us unto, no approaching Danger shall so scare us, as to make us throw aside our Work.

We should labour after St. Paul's Spirit, who being called to preach Christ, *was not moved with those Bonds and Afflictions which, he was informed, did await him at Jerusalem; neither counted he his Life dear unto himself so that he might finish his Course with Joy, and the Ministry which he had received of the Lord, to testifie the Gospel of the Grace of God, Acts 20. 24.* And we being in God's Way, and employed in his Service, have as good Security that we shall

shall be no Loser by any Hazard we run, as we can desire; for our Master hath said, *That whosoever will lose his Life for his Sake shall save it*, Luke 9.

5. He must be content to perform those Services which he is most averse from, when God calls him thereunto, as well as those which he can more willingly and readily close with. 'Tis not many times either the Difficulty or the Hazard of some Services that so much keeps us from undertaking them, as a secret Averseness in our Minds from them, of which no good Account can be given. But now God will often put us upon those things which, according to our own Inclinations, we are most averse from; and this he doth,

(1.) That he may hereby subdue that Distemper in us, and bring us to that Frame, as our Wills may be wholly resigned up to his Will. For effecting this Work, this great Work in us, he sees there is no better Way than by crossing us; as we our selves acknowledge, while we cross Children that we may break them of their Wills, and that they may become more tractable

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and willing to be ordered and disposed of as we judge best for them.

(2.) God will often put us on things which we have no Mind to, that his powerful and over-ruling Providence therein, may the more clearly appear unto us. When we contrive things ourselves, and bring them about according to our own Minds, then is God's Providence less taken Notice of: But when beside, and it may be against all our Thoughts, Desires, and Inclinations, he over-rules us for our Good, then we cannot but acknowledge him, and give him all the Glory.

6. He must be willing to serve God in the Performance of those Duties which may expose him to the Censures, Ill-will, and Reproach of the World, as well as of those Duties that are of better Repute, and may possibly meet with so much Kindness from the World as to be generally commended and applauded. For Instance, if a Magistrate punish a common Cheater, or some notoriously wicked and profligate Person, that is vile in every Man's Eye, Men will generally like of and applaud such an Act of Justice; but if he should venture

ture to punish, according to Law, one of the best of the Town for Swearing or Drunkenness, perhaps he should be as much reproach'd for this, as he seemed to be honoured and applauded for the other Act of Justice. And yet who sees not, that judges aright, but that there may be much more true Zeal for God, and against Sin, in this latter Act of Justice, than in the former. When God calls us to do him any Service, we must not consult with the World, whether we shall do it or no, and ask them first how they will like it, but do our Duty, and serve God faithfully and zealously in our Places, though we should thereby draw upon our selves the Odium and Clamours of all the World.

I have done with the Matter of the Charge, and the Duties therein contained. I come now to the Manner how the second Duty is to be performed, or the Qualifications of that Service which we are to perform unto God; *We must serve him with a perfect Heart and with a willing Mind*, sincerely and cheerfully. Of these in their Order.

And first of the former Qualification, the Sincerity of our Services, signi-

fied by the Phrase of *serving him with a perfect Heart*. That this notes Sincerity, and why 'tis described in this Manner, I shall briefly shew, and then proceed to propound and prosecute what I have further to say.

For the former, that a perfect Heart is nothing else but a sincere and upright Heart, we may gather from those Scriptures in which the Meaning of it is expounded by other Words that are joined with it to explain it. That Truth, Uprightness and Sincerity are all one, is evident; and the perfect Man is the upright Man, both Words being in Scripture used for one and the same thing. So *Prov. 2. 21. The Upright shall dwell in the Land, and the Perfect shall remain in it.* And *Psal. 37. 37. Mark the perfect Man, behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace.* And of Job it is said, that he was a perfect Man and Upright, that feared God and eschewed Evil, Chap. 1. 1. And as 'tis explained by Uprightness, so is it also by Truth as opposed to Hypocrisie. Remember O Lord, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart, 1 King. 20. 3. So that to walk before God with a perfect Heart, is to walk before him in Truth and Sincerity.

But why (in the second Place) is Sincerity thus express'd? Why is the Man who is a sincere and upright Man styled the perfect Man? Not certainly, that we should apprehend him to be without Sin.

(1.) No such Perfection is to be found in this Life. God hath pronounced all to be Sinners. *There is no Man that sinneth not*, 1 King. 8. 46. *All Men, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under Sin, and there is none Righteous*, that is, perfectly free from Sin, *no not one*, Rom. 3. 9, 10. *All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God*, Ver. 23. *If we say we have no Sin, we deceive our selves, and the Truth is not in us*, 1 John 1. 8.

(2.) The Scripture records the Failings and sinful Imperfections of those very Persons who are said to have been perfect; and therefore 'tis impossible, that absolute and sinless Perfection should be intended. Though Job had from God's own Mouth the high Elogium and Commendation of a *perfect and upright Man*, Job 2. 3. yet in the very next Chapter, we have his Weaknesses left upon Record; for there we meet with him, *cursing the Day of his Birth*, and afterwards in several other Passages

of that Book discovering his sinful Infirmities, in the Consideration and the Sense whereof he acknowledgeth himself to be vile, Chap. 40. 4. and abhorreth himself, repenting in Dust and Ashes Chap. 42. 6.

Neither was that excellent King, Hezekiah, without his Failings, witness his Carriage in the Business of the Embassadors of the Princes of Babylon, presently after his Recovery out of that very Sickness, when he desired God to remember, *that he had walked before him in Truth and with a perfect Heart* 2 King. 20.

So we have this Testimony given to Asa, *that his Heart was perfect all his Days*, 2 Chron. 15. 17. and yet are there in the next Chapter several great Miscarriages of his related, namely *That in his War against Baasha, he relied on the Syrians and not on the Lord* 2 Chron. 16. 7. and being by Hanani the Seer reproved for it, he was wroth with him and put him in Prison: And *that he oppressed some of the People at the same time*, Ver. 10. And lastly, *that being diseased in his Feet, until his Disease was exceeding great, he sought not to the Lord, but to the Physician*, Ver.

12. The upright and sincere Man then, though subject to many Frailties, is said to be a perfect Man.

1. In Respect of his true and unfeigned Desire and endeavour after Perfection, though when he hath done his utmost he falls far short of it. Perfect he would be, Perfection he aims at, that's the Mark he hath in his Eye, and in that Regard he is dignified with the honourable Title of a perfect Man.

2. The upright Man is a perfect Man comparatively. Though his Heart and Life be stained and blemished with many Corruptions and Irregularities, yet if the Comparison be made between him and the wicked Man, he may be said to be a perfect Man.

3. He is a perfect Man in God's merciful and gracious Account through Christ, for whose Sake, and upon whose Account all his Imperfections are so far done away, as they are not imputed to him, nor ever shall be charged upon him to his Condemnation.

4. Though his Sanctification, and inherent Righteousness be in Respect of Measures and Degrees far short of that Perfection which the Law of God requires, yet is there a kind of Perfection

tion in another Sense, a Perfection of Parts, and this in several Respects.

(1.) The whole Man, every Power and Faculty of the Soul being renewed.

(2.) All the several Graces required in the Soul, being begun, and to be found in the Soul, in some weaker Measure.

(3.) There being a conscientious Respect to the whole Will of God, and a true, though weak Desire and Endeavour to please him in all things. In Respect of this Perfection of Parts, the upright Man may be called a perfect Man, though in every of those Parts he want much of the Degrees of that Perfection which he is pressing hard after: As a little Child may be said to be a perfect Man in Respect of all the essential and integral Parts, though he want much of that due Growth and Stature which he is tending towards, and may, if he live, in due time attain unto.

And thus I have shewed, That to serve God *with a perfect Heart*, is to serve him in *Sincerity*, and why Sincerity is exprest by Perfection.

Now in treating of this Qualification of our Services, I shall,

I. Shew

1. Shew briefly what Sincerity is, and wherein it consists.

2. That this Qualification is necessary in all acceptable Services, and why God requires it, and lays so much Stress upon it.

3. I shall apply all.

I. The Nature of Sincerity, what it is, and wherein it consists, we may in part gather even from this Scripture. *David* chargeth *Solomon*, to serve God with a *perfect Heart*. The Heart then is the Seat of Sincerity, and the due Frame of the Heart is that which gives the Denomination of Sincerity to all our Services.

Hence it is, that the Heart is so often mentioned when Sincerity is spoken of. *Let your Heart be perfect with the Lord our God, to walk in his Statutes, and to keep his Commandments*, 1 Reg. 8. 61. *Asa's Heart was perfect with the Lord all his Days*, 1 Reg. 15. 14. *Remember how I have walked before thee in Truth and with a perfect Heart*, said *Hezekiah* in his Prayer, 2 Reg. 20. 3. So for Uprightness, *God saved the upright in Heart*, Psal. 7. 10. *Shout for Joy all ye that are upright in Heart*, Psal. 32. 11. But

But then, what is that special Frame and Disposition of the Heart wherein Sincerity lies, and from whence all our Services are denominated sincere?

I answer, it lies in the inward Conformity of the Heart, to what we make Profession of and pretend to in our External Services. When we are really within what we outwardly make Shew of in our Words and Actions, in our Performances and Services, then are our Services done in Sincerity.

And this will further appear to us if we consider what is contrary to Sincerity; and that is all Manner of inward Guile, Falsehood and Hypocrisie. *Blessed is the Man (saith David) in whose Spirit there is no Guile; that is, who is sincere and sound within, Psal. 32. 2.* And when our Saviour would give Testimony to Nathanael's Sincerity, he saith of him, *Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no Guile, Joh. 1. 47.*

To exclude this Guile and Hypocrisie, we shall find, that Truth is often joined with Sincerity, unfolding the Nature of it. *Let us keep the Feast with the unleavened Bread of Sincerty and Truth, 1 Cor. 5. 8.* And in 2 Reg. 20. 3. before cited. *Remember how I have walked*

walked before thee in Truth and with a perfect Heart. And *Josh. 24. 14.* Serve the Lord in Sincerity and Truth. To all which we may add, *Psal. 51. 6.* where Truth alone without the Addition of any other Word is taken for Sincerity: *Behold, thou desirest Truth in the inward Parts.*

Well then, Sincerity, as I said, lies in an Agreement and Correspondence of our Hearts with our outward Profession and Deportment, with our Words, Actions and Services. When our Hearts go along with our Services, and are in Truth so inwardly affected and disposed as by our external Carriage and Performances we make Shew of, then are we sincere.

So much of the Nature of Sincerity, which was the first thing propounded.

S E R M O N

SERMON X.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

2. **I**T follows that I shew, that Sincerity is a necessary Qualification in all acceptable Services; and that no Service we do, whatsoever else it may have

have to commend it, can be pleasing to God without it; which was the Reason why *David* expressly mentions it, and qualifies *Solomon's* Services with it.

1. God expressly requires it, and insisteth on it as a due and requisite Qualification of our Services. *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*, said God to *Abraham*, Gen. 17. 1. that is, be thou upright and sincere in all thy Ways, in the whole Course of thy Life, and in all thy Services. *Fear the Lord, and serve him in Truth and with all your Heart*, that is, with a perfect Heart, 1 Sam. 12. 24. This God insisted on in his Covenant which he made with *David* and his Seed, 1 Reg. 2. 4. *If thy Children take heed to their Ways, and walk before me in Truth, and with all their Heart, and with all their Soul*, (all which Expressions signify nothing else but Sincerity) *there shall not fail thee a Man upon the Throne of Israel*. *Fear the Lord and serve him in Sincerity and Truth*, was *Joshua's* Charge to the *Israelites* in the Scripture before mentioned, Josh. 24. 14. *The true Worshipers worship God in Spirit and in Truth; for he seeketh such to worship him*, Joh. 4. 23, 24. Now if this be a Qualification

ification which God expressly requires, and so much insists on, how can any Service be acceptable to him without it? Can our Services please him when they are done in another Manner than he enjoined them to be done?

2. As he requires Sincerity of us in all we do, so he makes great Account of it; *he hath Pleasure in Uprightness*, 1 Chron. 29. 17. *And such as are upright in their Way are the Lord's Delight*, Prov. 11. 20. Now if he hath given us to understand, that he takes Delight in Uprightness, and in the Ways and Services of upright Men, he thereby plainly implies, that he takes no Pleasure either in the Persons or Services of those who are void of this Grace.

And there are two principal Reasons for it; the one of which is taken from the Nature of God, and the other from the Nature of this Grace.

(1.) He is a God of Truth, and in that Respect he hath a perfect Hatred and Abhorrence of all Guile and Falsehood. *Lying Lips are an Abomination to him*, Prov. 12. 22. and all unsincere and hypocritical Services are a real Lie, as making Shew and giving outward Signification

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nification of that Truth in the Heart which it is wholly destitute of.

(2.) From the Nature of this Grace Sincerity looks to God, eyes him, and aims at pleasing him in every thing.

'Tis that Singleness of Heart that makes a Man do all things *as unto the Lord, and not unto Men*, as the Apostle speaks, *Coloss. 3. 22, 23*. And who is there amongst us that doth not like and take Pleasure in this Disposition of his Servant! How much more pleasing must it be to God, *who ponders the Hearts, and weigheth the Spirits of Men*, *Prov. 21. 2.* and *tries their Reins*, *Psal. 7. 9.* Who hath a perfect Discovery of all the secret Tendencies, Motions and Workings of the Hearts of the Children of Men; and who hath made known the gracious Respect he hath to the Upright, by declaring, *That his Eyes run too and fro throughout the whole Earth to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them whose Heart is perfect towards him*, *2 Chron. 16. 9.*

But where this Grace is wanting, there is only a meer Pretence of a Desire to please God in our Services, while the Eye of the Soul looks another Way, and nothing is less design'd or aimed

aimed at than that which is pretended. To be the chief thing we propound to our selves. Than which nothing can be more odious unto God, it being the highest Affront to his Truth and Omniscience; to his Truth, as if the God of Truth could be pleased with false, lying, and hypocritical Services: And to his Omniscience, as if his piercing and all-seeing Eye did not discern all the Falseness and Rottenness of our Hearts; as if he were as the *Idols of the Heathen, that have Eyes and see not*, Psal. 115. 5. or, as *Man that looketh only upon the outward Appearance, and cannot view the Heart*, 1 Sam. 16. 7.

Use 1. Let it then be our great and constant Care and Endeavour, that all our Services be accompanied with this Qualification. Sincerity is the Salt that seasons them all, and without it they are unsavory, no way pleasing or acceptable unto God. We would be loath to have our Services lost, and that they should signifie just nothing in God's Account; and yet lost they are, and of no Value at all with him, if they be not thus qualified. Yea, which is worse, instead of accepting them, and

taking them in good Part, he loathes them, and is highly displeased with them.

How he favours and resents our best Services without Sincerity, we may learn from his Expostulations with the Jews upon this Account, *Isai. i.*

They were much exercised in presenting God with Sacrifices and Oblations; they were very conformable to the Law in Respect of their Observation of the external Rites and Ceremonies thereof; very punctual in their keeping up the outward Solemnities of their new Moons and Sabbaths, and other Festivals. But forasmuch as their wicked and ungodly Lives did proclaim their Hypocrisie in all their religious Worship, God lets them know, that their Services were odious and abominable in his Eyes; and that he could not without very great Disgust behold them. *What Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me (saith he) I am full of the Barnt-Offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts; and I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-goats. When ye come before me, what hath required this at your Hands to tread my Courts? Bring no more vain Oblations. Incense is an Abomination to me; the new*

Moons

Moons, and the Sabbaths, and the Calling
of Assemblies, I cannot away with; it is
Iniquity, even their solemn Meeting. Your
New-Moons and your appointed Feasts my
Soul hateth, they are a Trouble to me; I
am weary to bear them, Ver. 11, 12, 13, 14.

And upon this very Account of the
Hypocrisie of their religious Services ma-
nifested in the Wickedness of their Lives
otherwise, it is, that in Expressions of
highest Indignation, he saith, *That he*
who killed an Ox (for Sacrifice, he means)
as if he slew a Man; he that sacrific-
ed a Lamb, as if he had cut off a Dog's
Neck; and he that brought an Oblation,
as if he had offered Swines Blood, Hos. 3.

How much then doth it concern us
all to look well to it, that all our spiritu-
al Sacrifices be seasoned with this Salt
of Sincerity; that Sincerity be still an
Ingredient and a principal Ingredient in
every Service we offer up to God?

(1.) In those Duties of God's imme-
diate Worship which are required in the
first Table, let us take heed, that our
Hearts and Souls be still engaged as far
as our Bodies, and much more: *That*
we draw not near to God with our Mouths,
and honour him with our Lips, when our

B b 2

Hearts

Hearts are far removed from him; that we worship him in Spirit and in Truth; and that we be not like that hypocritical People, that came to the Ordinance of God, and sat before the Prophet as God's People, and heard his Words, but would not do them, their Hearts in the meantime running after their Covetousness, Ezek. 33. 31. When you come from giving your Attendance on the publick Ordinances of God, and retire your selves at home, reflect upon your selves, and put the Question to your own Hearts, saying, Where has my Heart been this Day while I was waiting on God in his House? What are the things with which my Mind hath been taken up? Have not my Affections been wandring, and my Thoughts in the Ends of the Earth, while in the Posture of my Body I have made a Shew of reverent and diligent Attendance on God? Have not the World and the things thereof crowded into my Heart and thrust out God? While I seemed to hearken with much heed and Attention, have I not been contriving in my Mind how I might best manage or transact such an Affair? how I might best rid my Hands of such a trouble-

troublesome Business? or free my self from this or that worldly Intanglement?

'Tis well, if some of these things do not take up Men's Minds a great deal more than the weighty Affairs of their Souls, and the great Business for which they assemble themselves. Yea 'twere well, if worse matters than these did not fill the Heads and Hearts of many, while they are sitting before God in his House, and attending on him by their bodily Presence, as his People are wont to do; if even then they were not too often contriving where they might next meet their lewd Companions, and how they might best make Provision for their Lusts? Is this to serve God with a perfect Heart? And are these Persons those true and sincere Worshippers, whom God seeks to worship him? No, he is far enough from seeking such to worship him: He abominates their pretended Worship, and will not accept an Offering at their Hands. Such an hypocritical People is a *Smoak in his Nose*, *Isai. 65. 5.* and *they are the People of his Wrath*, and not of his Favour and Acceptance, *Isai. 10. 6.*

(2.) Let us also be as careful, that all our Duties and Services relating to the

second Table, have this Qualification of Sincerity mingled with them.

The Sum of the Duties of the second Table is Love to our Neighbour: Let all the Love we make Shew of be sincere. This the Scripture much insisteth on. *Let Love be without Dissimulation*, Rom. 12. 9. *Let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth*, 1 Joh. 3. 18. Our Love must be *unfeigned*, ἀνυπόκριτος, 2 Cor. 6. 6. 1 Pet. 1. 22. a Love that hath no Hypocrisy in it, no Manner of Guile, no deceitful Varnish or Dress, no Pretence to that which is not.

There are those who have learnt the Art of acting Love so to the Life, that if a Man observed their Words and outward Deportment, he might think they were even made up of Kindness; and yet if he could look into their Hearts he would find them full of Mischief and destructive Counsels and Machinations against those to whom they make Shew of greatest Love: Unto whom the Character of *David's Enemies* fully agrees; *The Words of their Mouth are smother than Butter, but War is in their Hearts; their Words are softer than Oil yet are they drawn Swords*, Psal. 55. 21.

Men that speak fair, so as you cannot choose but believe them, and take them to be really your Friends, and yet *have seven Abominations in their Hearts*, as Solomon describes them, Prov. 26. 25.

Let us endeavour to be so far from the odious and treacherous Disposition of these Men, that we always study there may be a perfect Consent and exact Harmony between our Hearts and Tongues; or, if there be any Difference at any time, let it only lie in this, that we bear them more Love in our Hearts than we make Shew of, or pretend to in our Words.

This seems to be that which St. James aims at in the Place beforementioned: *Let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth*: That is, let us not be so forward to shew Love in Words, as to give real Proof thereof in our Deeds: Let Men find us better than our Words, and have Experience of much more real Kindness and hearty Affection manifested in our Actions than we ever promised, or made Expression of in our Language. This is true and sincere Love; Love unfeigned; no Mixture of Dissimulation, or Hypocrisy in this.

And as for Love, so for all the Offices and Services of Love to our Neighbour, let us labour they may be performed sincerely.

Now I shall add a few Motives to prevail with us to labour after Sincerity in all things.

Motive 1. The great Acceptance that Sincerity hath with God, and the gracious Respect he hath unto this Qualification of our Obedience, should persuade us to endeavour it. Next to the Mediation and Intercession of Christ, by whom all our spiritual Sacrifices are acceptable unto God, there is nothing that so much commends our Services to God, and renders them so pleasing in his Sight, as Sincerity doth. This is manifest from what the Scripture declares concerning his Esteem of this gracious Qualification, in several particulars.

(1.) God looks after Sincerity, calls for it, and takes Notice of it in his Servants, and in all their Services, above any other thing. *My Son, give me thy Heart*, Prov. 23. 26. that is, serve me heartily and sincerely, not in outward Shew only, and hypocritically. *God desireth Truth in the inward Parts*, Psal.

51. 6. and seeketh such to worship him, as worship him in Spirit and in Truth, John

4. 23. This inward Truth our Saviour discerning in *Nathanael*, how doth he point at him, and mark him out as a Person worthy of the Notice and Observation of others; *Behold, a true Israelite, in whom there is no Guile*, John 1. 47.

(2.) Where Sincerity is, God passeth by and mercifully overlooks great Failings. *Asa* had many great Frailties, several of which are recorded in the 2 *Chron.* 16. but God draws his Sincerity as a Vail over them to hide them, giving him this honorable Character; *Nevertheless the Heart of Asa was perfect all his Days*, 1 Reg. 15. 14.

(3.) Where Sincerity is found, God accepteth and graciously rewardeth the meanest Services. *Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones, a Cup of cold Water only in the Name of a Disciple, he shall in no wise lose his Reward*, Matth. 10. 42. Observe here, the Sincerity of the Action is that which makes so small a thing to be of that Acceptance with God. It is not said, whosoever gives a Cup of cold Water to one of these little ones to drink shall not lose his Reward; but whosoever gives it to one

one of them *in the Name of a Disciple*, that is, upon that Account and for that Reason, because they are his Disciples; and so 'tis more fully exprest, *Mark 9. 41. Whosoever shall give you to drink a Cup of cold Water in my Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his Reward.* A Cup of cold Water is a slender Alms; but when 'tis given sincerely, *to a Disciple in the Name of a Disciple*, and because he belongs to Christ, this puts such a Value upon it in God's Account, as it shall not pass unrewarded. But if Sincerity be wanting; if while a Man pretends Love to a Disciple as a Disciple, he hath other by and low Ends of his own, then, though he should *bestow all his Goods to feed the Poor*, it would be nothing in God's Esteem, *1 Cor. 13. 3.* As this is a sad Truth to all Hypocrites, whose Hearts are full of Guile and Falsehood; so 'tis full of Comfort to those that are sincere. Let it be granted, that you can do God but little Service; they are poor and inconsiderable Sacrifices that you can present him withal; and which is worie, they are so blemish'd and defiled with sinful Imperfections, that you fear God will never accept of them.

But

But is your Heart sound? Are you sincere in what you do? Then never be discouraged: God will mercifully accept, and bountifully reward your weakest and meanest Services performed in the Integrity of your Heart, while he with Indignation rejects the most specious, yea the most glorious Services of Hypocrites, *who honour God with their Lips, and draw nigh unto him with their Mouths, when their Hearts are far removed from him.* And so much of that first Motive to Sincerity, the Acceptance it hath with God,

Motive 2. 'Tis a singular Support in time of Temptations, and Afflictions.

(1.) In time of Temptations; for whatsoever Satan may object against you, and assault you with, yet as long as you *hold fast your Integrity*, he hath little Advantage against you, seeing you have your Sincerity to oppose against all his fiery Darts.

Doth he object against you the many Sins and former Miscarriages of your Life? and doth he represent them to you, and set them in order before your Face in the most formidable and amazing Manner, that he is able; yet as long as
your

your Conscience tells you, that amidst so many Enormities the Bent of your Heart was to please God in all things, neither did you allow your self in any known Sin, you have therein where-withal to uphold your Spirit, and to repel the Force of his Temptations so far as they shall never drive you to despair of God's Mercy.

Is Satan from day to day following and pursuing you with violent Temptations, to hurry you to the Commission of new Sins? And is the Force of his Temptations and your Weakness such, as that sometimes he prevails over you? Yet if your Conscience tell you, that you give not your self up and render your self a voluntary captive to him, but that you earnestly pray against and resist his Temptations, and that 'tis the greatest and most constant Trouble of your Heart, that you should at any time be overcome by them, you may hence warrantably conclude, that the Sin which your Heart is thus set against, shall never be imputed to you to your Condemnation, notwithstanding all that Satan may suggest to the contrary.

Doth Satan continually inject into your Mind horrible Blasphemies, and

dis-

dishonourable Thoughts of God; and when he hath so done, endeavour to represent them to you as unpardonable, or inconsistent with any Truth of Grace? As long as your Heart tells you, and your Conscience bears you Witness, that you hate and abhor those Blasphemies, that you cast them out again as fast as the Devil injects them, and that you sincerely desire and endeavour to entertain high and honourable Thoughts of God, you need not doubt but God who is acquainted as with Satan's Malice, so with the Sincerity of your Heart, will mercifully pass by your Weaknesses, and charge upon Satan's Account much of that which he would charge upon you.

Lastly, Doth Satan represent you to your self as an Hypocrite, because of those Remainders of Guile and Hypocrisie that are in your Services? (for such Remainders there are in the best) If you discern the Falseness and Guile of your Heart; if you truly hate it, disown it, be humbled for it, and strive against it; if your Conscience bears you Witness, that you desire and endeavour nothing more than to be sincere and upright in every thing you do; you have no Reason to question but that God, who

who knows the Integrity of your Heart, will mercifully pardon in you those Relicks of Hypocrisie which you inwardly hate and abhor, and cordially desire to be perfectly delivered from.

(2.) 'Tis also a great Support in outward Afflictions. 'Tis true, there is nothing more sad and confounding to a Man under great and sharp Afflictions, than when his Conscience shall tell him, and that truly, that he hath been an Hypocrite, and that now God begins to reckon with him for it. How can this Man *whose Heart thus condemns him*, bear up under the Hand of God? How can he with any Comfort or Encouragement go to God in Prayer, or expect any Succour or Relief from him? He who by his hypocritical Services hath but mock'd God in his best Performances; he who hath had a false and rotten Heart under all the outward Shews and Dresses of religious Services in which he hath appeared; what can he else look for at the Hands of God, but that Sentence against such as he is, *Matth. 23. 27. Wo unto you Hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited Sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward,* but

but are within full of dead Men's Bones,
and of all Uncleanness.

But the sincere and sound Heart, hath
a solid Ground of Comfort in every E-
state. The Apostle St. Paul, in the
midst of many Troubles, took Com-
fort in his Sincerity. *Our rejoicing is*
this, saith he, the Testimony of our Con-
science, that in Simplicity and godly Sinceri-
ty, not with fleshly Wisdom, we have had
our Conversation in the World, 2 Cor. 1.

12.

The Conscience a Man hath of his
Sincerity, begets in him an holy Bold-
ness and Confidence in his Addresses un-
to God. *If our Hearts condemn us not,*
then have we Confidence towards God,
1 Joh. 3. 2. This encouraged and em-
boldened *Hezekiah*, when he had recei-
ved a Message of Death, to go to God
and appeal to him concerning the Pur-
pose of his Heart in the Course of his
Life, saying, *Remember, O Lord, how I*
have walk'd before thee in Truth and with
a perfect Heart, and have done that
which is good in thy Sight, 2 Reg. 20. 3.

And what a Privilege will this be
when you come to lie upon your Death-
Bed, and shall be looking every Hour
to enter upon Eternity; and when all the
World

World shall be taking its last Leave of you and forsaking you for ever; when no Creature shall any longer be able to relieve you or administer any Comfort to you; I say, what a Privilege will it then be to be able to appeal to God touching the Sincerity of your Heart, and your Purpose and Endeavour to please God in the whole Course of your Life!

Motive 3. Sincerity or Uprightness is a sure Guide to a Man in all his Ways. The Integrity of the Upright shall guide them, Prov. 11. 3. And the Righteousness of the Perfect shall direct his Way, Ver. 5. And there are several Grounds hereof.

(1.) A Man of an upright Heart will the better understand the Way in which he ought to go. He truly and sincerely desires in every Matter that lies before him to know what his Duty is, and what Way God would have him take: And this unfeigned Desire and sincere Willingness to know the right Way, very much helps him to discern what his Duty is, and what Way he ought to choose.

For if the right Way be discovered to him, he is glad to see it, and ready to embrace it. All that he enquires and searchieth after, is to know what is most agreeable to his Duty, and what will be most pleasing unto God in every Business.

He hath not suffered himself to be so prepossest, so engaged and addicted to this or that Way before-hand, as nothing can be welcome to him but what may encourage him in that Way in which he hath a Mind to go, whether right or wrong; but he hath had a Care to preserve an Indifferency of Spirit, and a Mind equally poized, and ready to take up and approve of any thing that God shall reveal to be agreeable to his Will: This is the Frame of the Upright and sincere Heart.

But where Sincerity is not, the Heart of a Man is biassed and strongly inclined to take up that Course which carnal Wisdom shall suggest and offer unto him as best conducing to these carnal Ends and Designs which he hath a Mind to carry on: In the mean time God is forgotten, neither is it in all his Thoughts to consider what is most pleasing unto God, and what is most agreeable

ble to the Rule: This doth not come at all under Consultation with him.

And therefore if any thing should be offered to take him off from the Way he is bent upon, it is to no purpose. The Arguments for what he hath in his Mind to do, though never so contrary to his Duty, shall evermore be stronger with him than any Arguments that can be brought against them. His deceitful and unsound Heart sends up such Vapours and casts such Mists before his Eyes as make him unable to discern the right Way. But Integrity clears a Man's Eye-sight, and dispels those gross Fogs and Mists which hinder the Discovery and Approbation of the right Way.

(2.) Integrity or Sincerity strengthens and confirms a Man to adhere to that Way which he understands to be the right Way. No Temptations shall easily prevail with a Man of an upright Heart to turn him aside into any other By-path. He is resolved to proceed in that Way which he apprehends most pleasing unto God, whatsoever may come of it.

But where Sincerity is not, a Man will be apt to prevaricate, to warp, and to

to turn aside, upon any carnal Consideration, or slight Temptation which he shall meet with.

And if it be here said, that upright Men may sometimes swerve from the right Way, and turn aside as well as others; I answer,

1st, That this is when they are careless, and do not mind those Principles within them according to which they mostly do, and always should steer their Course. There are times when the best may be overtaken, through their Neglect to keep their Hearts, ponder their Paths, and often to renew their Resolutions of following God fully.

2^{dly}, Sincerity is imperfect, and 'tis mixed with much Unsoundness and Falseness, which sometimes prevails, obstructing and choaking the Actings of Sincerity.

3^{dly}, Sometimes God leaves them to themselves, as he did *Hezekiah* in the Business of the Embassadors of the King of *Babylon*, that he may thereby discover to them their Weakness, and the Falseness of their Hearts, and the Strength of the Remainders of their Corruption, to humble them and make them more

watchful, and more constantly dependant on God for his Assistance.

But notwithstanding all this, ordinarily where Sincerity is, a Man is much strengthened by it to persevere in that Way which he apprehends God would have him walk in: And the more Sincerity any Man hath, the greater Strength ordinarily he hath against all Temptations by which he may be assaulted and solicited to do any thing contrary to his Duty.

(3.) The upright Man is most sure of God's Guidance and Directions in all his Ways, especially in those of them which are of most Consequence and Difficulty. For his Heart being (as hath been said) disposed and bent to do what is most pleasing unto God; and he in order thereunto, being truly desirous to know God's Pleasure and his own Duty, if we have honourable Thoughts of God, and have right Notions of his Goodness, we must needs conclude, that he is most ready to inform, teach, and guide him. Who may warrantably expect to be taught and informed aright, if he may not, who hath an Heart prepared and ready, determined and fixed to do the Will of God, if he might

but know it? This is that which the Psalmist intends, *Psal. 25. 12. What Man is he that feareth the Lord? Him will he teach in the Way that he shall choose.*

What Man is he that feareth the Lord? that is, who is afraid of offending God, and would understand what that Way is in which he shall not offend him? Who is he that out of a Care to please God, is solicitous to know and make Choice of that Way that will be acceptable to God? Who is he whose Heart is thus prepared to comply with God's Will, and give himself up in Obedience to it, as soon as it shall be manifested to him? Whosoever or wheresoever this Man be, this is he whom God is most ready to instruct and guide: *Him will he teach in the Way that he shall choose.*

But now Hypocrites and Men void of Sincerity, though they may pretend to a true Willingness to address themselves to do whatsoever is pleasing unto God if they might but understand his Mind, yet are they strongly and resolvedly bent upon their own Ways, and when it comes to the Trial, their own Ways will they choose and pursue, let God say

what he pleaseth to withdraw them from their Purposes.

We have an Instance hereof in the *Israelites*; they had a Mind to go down into *Egypt*; thither were their Hearts bent, and nothing should take them off: yet they come to the Prophet desiring him to enquire of the Lord what they should do in that Business and promising to yield Obedience unto the Word of the Lord whatsoever should be, *Jer. 42. 1, 2, 3, 6.* Well, *Jeremiah* having enquired of God for them returns them an Answer, that God would not have them think of going into *Egypt* and sets before them the sad Evils that did await them if they should go down. But all this prevails not with them down to *Egypt* they will, and thither they hasten as fast as they can. Wherefore the Prophet tells them, that they *dissembled in their Hearts* when they sent him unto the Lord to enquire concerning his Pleasure, engaging themselves to be obedient, *Ver. 20.*

Now God discerning this evil and hypocritical Frame of Heart in Men sometimes refuseth to have any thing to do with them, as he tells the *Israelites* by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that seeing

they had set up their Idols in their Hearts, and had put the Stumbling-Block of their Iniquities before their Eyes, were resolvedly bent upon their own Ways, he could not be enquired of at all by them, Ezek. 14. 3. And no Wonder; for who amongst us would be very forward to give Counsel and Advice to a Man, that should appear to ask it with a Resolution to take his own Course at last, whatsoever Counsel should be given him. Much less may Men of such false and deceitful Hearts expect to be taught of God, seeing they mock him by asking Counsel of him, whereas they are beforehand resolved to follow the Imaginations of their own Hearts. The Truth is, 'tis all one, whether they be informed concerning their Duty or no; for they will take up their own Course however: Only the more clear their Information and Light is against which they rebel, the greater is their Sin.

But a Man of a sincere and upright Heart, that truly desires to know his Duty, that he may practise it, shall be sure to be taught of God, according to Christ's Promise to such; *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know it*, John 7. 17.

And how great a Privilege it is to be sure thus to be informed and guided upon all Occasions, he cannot but acknowledge, who considers how many Difficulties and Perplexities, Labyrinths and Intanglements a Man meets with in the Course of his Life; and how often in Matters of his greatest Concernment he is at a Stand, or so bewildered as he knows not which Way to go.

Motive 4. Sincerity is a great Preservative against final Apostacy or falling away from God. Though Grace be weak, and Corruption strong, and Temptations violent, so that a Man is often worsted and foiled; yet if there be sincerity, that will, by Degrees, set it to work, as it will recover the Soul, and set it right again. Besides, God is engaged to stand by the Upright and to uphold them in all their Conflicts. *The Eyes of the Lord run too and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them whose Hearts are perfect towards him, 2 Chron. 16. 9.* Which Place, though it be to be understood of those Aids, Assistances and Deliverance in outward Dangers and Conflicts, yet is it no less applicable to inward

Dangers and spiritual Conflicts, in which God's Goodness and Fidelity are no less engaged to stand by the Upright in Heart, than in outward Troubles; yea rather, much more in their spiritual Conflicts, as these are more dangerous, and threaten us more sorely, where not only our Temporal but our Eternal Welfare is concerned.

To this Purpose it is, that God says, *The Upright shall never be moved*, Psal. 15. 5. Psal 112. 6. *That he will be both a Sun and a Shield to them*, to comfort and protect them; and will give them Grace and Glory, Psal. 84. 11. He is so good to the true Israel, those that are of a clean Heart, that is, who are the true Worshippers, the same in Heart which they externally profess themselves to be; I say, he is so good to these, that in all their Conflicts and Temptations, *He holds them by their right Hand, and guides them by his Counsels, till he receives them to Glory*, Psal. 73. 1, 23, 24.

You who have attained but a little Strength, your Grace is very small, and you greatly fear least in a Time of Trial you should utterly fall away; are you sincere? Is your Heart upright towards God? Then suffer not immoderate

rate Fears to discourage you : God, whose Eyes run too and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of those whose Hearts are perfect with him, hath his Eyes upon you to shew himself strong for you, to uphold and support you when your Dangers shall be greatest.

Now you are in much Sorrow and Heaviness, full of many Fears and Dependancies; but Light is sown for the Righteous, and Gladness for the upright in Heart, Psal. 97. 11. God will not cast away a perfect Man, till he fill his Mouth with laughing, and his Lips with rejoicing, Job 8. 20, 21. Mark the perfect Man, behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace, Psal. 37. 37.

So then, whatever your present Fears may be how you shall persevere and hold out to the End ; if you be sincere you may rest assured of a comfortable Issue of all your Conflicts at last; and that you shall be more than Conqueror through Christ who hath loved you; as the Apostle speaks in the Name of all sincere and sound Believers, Rom. 8. 37.

But on the other side, where the Heart is not sound, there all external Professions, and pretended Zeal for Religion

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cannot secure a Man against falling away utterly: Yea, the most glorious Profession without Sincerity is likely to end in the most shameful Apostasie, so as such a Man may not only forsake and disown what he formerly professed, but hate it and persecute it with the utmost Rage and Violence.

We may observe in Scripture, that the Want of Sincerity is made the Reason, or Root of Mens Falling off from God. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us, 1 John 2. 19.* They were not of us, what's that? They were never inwardly and sincerely what they professed themselves to be. They were indeed among us, under the same visible Profession of Religion together with us: but they were not in Truth of our Number then; if a Man could have look'd into their Hearts, he might have discovered them to be but Hypocrites; and being not really of us they went out from us, which they would never have done if they had been sincere.

This Account the *Psalmist* gives of the Falling away of many of the *Israelites* to Idolatry and other Sins, *that*
their

their Heart was not right with God, Pſal.
 78. 37. Whatever your Profession of Religion may be, and whatever Esteem and Repute you may, upon that Account have gained among Men, look to your Hearts, see that all be sound and right within: If there be not Sincerity at bottom, you may become a profest Enemy to the Power of Godliness, yea a debauched and licentious Person, or an Atheist, before you die,

And so I have done with such Motives as I thought fit to insist on. And now, I hope, you will say, I am satisfied, that Sincerity is a most desirable thing: But how may it be attain'd? And how may a Man know when he hath attained it? To each of these I shall speak something briefly, and then dismiss this Subject, and go on to what next follows in the Text.

For the Former, if you would be sincere.

I. Be earnest with God in Prayer to make you so. In all your Addresses to God in Prayer, beg of him an upright Heart. Whatever else you omit or leave out in Prayer, let not this Suit be omitted. For indeed you have in Effect nothing without this; whatsoever else you
 may

may seem to have attained; it signifies nothing, it avails nothing at all towards Salvation, if there be not Sincerity. And 'tis only God, that can work it in you. He, at first, made Man upright; and now, that he hath lost his Uprightness, God must re-make him, make him so again; or he will never be so. To him therefore *David* applies himself; saying, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me*, Psal. 51. 10. And *let my Heart be sound in thy Statutes*, Psal. 119. 80.

2. Be much in serious Reflexions upon your self, before, in, and after all Duties and Services; and observe the Hypocrisie of your Heart, that you may be, still as you espy it, more humbled for it, and more vigorously endeavour the subduing of it. You are much mistaken if you think your best Services to be free from all Taint or Mixture of Hypocrisie. This odious Corruption is working in your Heart upon every Occasion, and infuseth its Venom into your Services more or less, whether you discern it or no.

It is, as I have shewed before, our Want of a more thorough Acquaintance with
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our selves, that we discover it not :
And our Want of right Apprehensions
of the Evill and Danger of it, that when
we do discover it, we so coldly and
slightly oppose our selves against it.

And as long as there are no serious
Endeavours to espy, resist and subdue
Hypocrisie, 'tis in vain to think, that
Sincerity can take Root and thrive in
our Hearts. If there be any small Mea-
sure of Sincerity in the Heart, Hypo-
crisie as long as neglected, and suffe-
red to have its Course without any
sound Check or Control, undermines
and blows up Sincerity, or choaks and
starves it as hurtful Weeds do the
Corn or useful Herbs.

3. Live in the View and frequent
Meditation of God's Omniscieny:
*Who hath not Eyes of Flesh, nor seeth as
Man seeth, Job 10. 4. Who looketh not
upon the outward Appearance as Man
doth, but upon the Heart, 1 Sam. 16.
7. Who searcheth the Heart and tries the
Reins, Jer. 17. 10. Who discovereth all
the Hypocrisie that lies hid in the most
secret and retired Corners of the
Heart; whose piercing and all-seeing
Eye cannot be deceived or deluded by
any outward Shews or Pretences.*

4. Set before you the odious Nature of Hypocrisie, and often consider how hateful it is in the Eye of God. How many Woes did Christ denounce against the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, Matth. 23. And still they run in this Form, *Wo unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, Hypocrites.*

Though they were guilty of many other great Sins, which our Saviour chargeth them with throughout the Chapter, yet their odious Hypocrisie, above all other their Sins, is taken Notice of in their Sentence; to give us to understand, that that was the Sin which above any other brought them under the Weight of so many heavy and dreadful Woes.

And when Christ would pronounce the severest Sentence against the unfaithful Servant, in what Terms doth he express himself? *Cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites*, Matth. 24. 51. as if he had said, let him have as hot a Place as any is in Hell; let him be where the Hypocrites are.

[illegible]

I have many more guilty of many
 the great sins which our Saviour
 died to atone for, through the
 blood of his precious blood
 Christ, yet their obvious hypocrisy
 and other sins are in the
 heart of their conscience; to give us
 a true picture of the sin which
 we are often brought to our knees
 in the light of the many new and

SERMON XI.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

AND so I pass from the Means to the Notes or Characters by which our Sincerity may be known. And here also I shall not enlarge, but

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comprise all I purpose to speak, under a few Heads.

1. Sincerity may be known by the constant Purpose and Bent of the Heart. If it be in all things to please God: it be a Man's abiding and steady Resolution and Endeavour to walk in every Way of God; to make Conscience of every known Duty, and to avoid every known Sin; small Sins as well as great; secret Sins as well as open Sins; Sins that have some Credit and Esteem in the World, as well as Sins that are in Disgrace and Disrepute with the Generality of Men. But having a little before spoken largely of the Universalities of our Obedience; I here forbear to trouble you with the Repetition of what has been already more largely insisted on.

This constant Frame of the Heart is an Argument of Sincerity, though there be many Weaknesses and Infirmities. Wherefore *David* hence concluded, *That he should not be confounded, because he had Respect to all God's Commandments* Psal. 119. 6.

He doth not say, because he had exactly kept all God's Commandments

and not at any Time failed, or come short of that absolute Perfection which the Law requires; that had been impossible for him or any Man else since the Fall; but he says, *because he had Respect unto all God's Commandments*; he eyed the Rule, and endeavoured to come as near unto it as he could: The Law of God was the Copy he still set before him, and desired to write after, though he did it but imperfectly; that was the Mark he still aimed at, though he often came short of it or shot beside it.

2. Sincerity, though it wilfully neglects no Duty, yet it lays the greatest stress upon the most important Duties: That is to say, it lays most Stress there where God lays most. Where God hath given the severest and most solemn Charge, there is Sincerity most anxious and solicitously careful not to offend. This is the Nature of Sincerity directly contrary to the Nature of Hypocrisy. For it is the Quality and Proper-ty of Hypocrisy to *strain at a Gnat and swallow a Camel*, according to our Saviour's Description of those notorious Hypocrites, the *Scribes and Pharisees*; and to affect to seem to be exactly and scrupulously

puloufly conscientious in *tything Mynt and Cummin*, in a strict Performance of the smallest Duties, while *the weighty Matters of the Law* are omitted.

And there is a three-fold Reason why Hypocrites make Choice of and sing out small things to make the Instance of their pretended Strictness and Conscientiousness.

(1.) Because those smaller things may be done at an easier Rate, they will not cost them much: Mynt and Cummin would bring them in but little if they should detain the Tythe of the from them to whom it is due. By exact paying the Tythes of these inconsiderable things, they forego not much of their Profit.

(2.) The smaller the things are which they shew their seeming Strictness and good Conscience, the greater Credit and Repute is it likely to gain them from the most of those who stand by and Observers of their exact Justice, at least as to outward Appearance. Who so just as they who Consciences will not allow them to injure their Neighbour in the smallest Trifle?

(3.) Th

(3.) This is a fit Vail to cover their greater and more gross Enormities, and to hide them from the Eyes of Men. Who durst suspect them of any foul and notorious Injustice, who give such Testimony of their exact Righteousness in the least things?

But Sincerity knows none of those Arts: It will tythe Mint and Cummin; or, if any thing be of less Value, where it is due; but yet its greatest Care is laid out upon the weightier Matters of the Law. And what are these? Our Saviour's Instances will teach us. *Ye tythe Mynt and Cummin; and omit Judgment, Mercy, and Faith,* Matth. 23. 23. to deal justly and righteously with Men in Matters of greater Moment; to shew Pity and Compassion to the needy and necessitous; to be true and faithful in keeping their Words, making good their Contracts and Promises, and much more their Oaths: Whatever Profession of Religion may be made, and how much Strictness soever may be pretended to in some smaller Matters, yet if Men shall allow themselves to deal unconscientiously and unjustly in weightier Matters; if they shall be hard-hearted and unmerciful towards those who are in

Distress; if they shall be false in the Promises and Contracts, these things are but too clear Arguments of Hypocrisie.

3. A Man's Sincerity may be known by his Jealousie over himself, and by his Inclination to suspect himself, as fearing lest he should be unsound. He knows how much it concerns him to be sincere; all that which he seemeth to have is nothing without it: All his Services are lost, yea, and his Soul together with them. Besides, he observes much deceitfulness and Falseness in his own Heart, and finds it an hard Matter to judge aright of himself; and upon these and such like Grounds he thinks he can never be sure enough, that his Heart is upright with God. And this his own Jealousie over himself discovers it several Ways.

(1.) It makes him careful to communicate often with his Heart, and to be upon several Occasions examining his Estate. He is not unwilling to look inward, and to know the worst of himself, but earnestly desirous to be thoroughly acquainted with his own Soul, and his spiritual Estate as to Sincerity and Hypocrisie. But this is that which the unsound Christian

who thinks well of his Condition with-
out good Grounds, hath no Mind to.
He is unwilling to disturb his false Peace
by looking too narrowly into himself.

(2.) The holy Jealously of the sincere
Christian appears by his Willingness to be
searched by the Word. He is glad when
that he hears comes nearest his Heart,
and pierceth to the dividing asunder of
the Joints and Marrow, as the Apostle
speaks; when it searcheth all the inmost
recesses of his Soul, laying him open,
and discovering him to himself. He is
glad when the Word meets with his
Hypocrisie or other Corruptions. But
the unsound Christian cannot endure the
Word should come too close to him, or
search him too narrowly.

And as in the publick dispensing of
the Word, so in Private is the sincere
Christian willing to be dealt plainly
and roundly with; so far as he is sincere,
he is willing to be minded of his Faults,
to be admonished and reprov'd; he
saith with David, Psal. 141. 5. *Let the
righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness;
let them reprove me, it shall be an excel-
lent Oyl which shall not break my Head.*

But the unsound Christian is for the
most Part impatient of Reproof or Ad-

monition; if you deal plainly and faithfully with him in what concerns his Soul, you take the ready Course to make him your Enemy.

(3.) The sincere Christian, out of Sense of his Disability to look into his own Heart sufficiently, and search it impartially, implores the Assistance of God therein, earnestly importuning him, that he would be pleased to search his Heart for him, and discover to him whatever Hypocrisie or Unsoundness may be secretly lurking or harbouring in it. So *David*, *Psal.* 139. 23, 24. *Search me, O God, and know my Heart; try me, and know my Thoughts, and see there be any wicked Way in me.* But Hypocrites are Strangers to such Petitions, they dread nothing more than that God would search their Hearts. Now that this Jealousie over your self, and solicitous Fear lest you should be found an Hypocrite, is an Argument of Sincerity, is evident; for this argues a true Love of Sincerity, and a high prizing and Valuation of it, together with an earnest Desire and studious Endeavour after it; which can never be where some Measure of Sincerity is not already wrought. He who is grossly and through

throughout an Hypocrite can never be affected with this Jealousie discovering itself in the Particulars now mentioned. He is as far wide of it as is possible, as hath been all along shewed.

But you will say, may not a sincere Christian sometimes observe in himself an Unwillingness to be admonished, and a Rising of his Heart against Reproof?

I answer, It may sometimes so be with one whose Heart is upright; especially when he is for the present under some Distemper, or when he is surprized and suddenly charged with some Miscarriage; or, when the Person reproofing, doth it bitterly, reproachfully, and with an Intent of laying open the Shame of the Offender, and of exposing him to the Scorn and Censures of others. In these and the like Cases, a Man that is not unsincere, may find himself discomposed and disturbed when he is reproofed. Though *Asa* had this honourable Testimony from the Spirit of God, *That his Heart was perfect all his Days*, yet we read concerning him, that *he was wrath with Hanani the Seer, that had reproofed him, and that he put him in Prison*, 2 Chron. 16. 10. But this is not the ordinary Frame of Persons whose Hearts are

are upright, neither do they allow themselves in it ; but afterwards, when they are come to themselves, their present Distemper being over, they condemn themselves, and are humbled before God for the Perverseness and evil Frame of their Hearts. In their right Temper, in which they always desire and endeavour to be, they humbly and thankfully submit themselves to Reproof, as to God's Ordinance, and bless God for it.

4. You may somewhat judge of the Sincerity or Hypocrisie of your Heart in Duties and Services, by the Frame of your Heart afterwards. What do you look out after upon the Performance of any Service? And what pleaseth you best? Do you look after the Approbation and Applause of Men? Do you greedily hearken and listen after what they say of you? If you meet with Respect and Acceptance from Men, are you pleased and satisfied? If they take little Notice of you, or speak nothing in Commendation of you, are you troubled? And is this the ordinary and constant Frame of your Heart? If it be mostly thus with you, these are shrewd Signs,

Signs, that there is more Pride and Hypocrisie than Sincerity in your Services; and that under a Shew of serving God, you serve your self, and seek your self more than God's Glory. But on the other Side, is this the Frame of any Man's Heart after Services, to be hearkening what God says, to be listening after what Peace he speaks, to be observing how he manifested his Acceptance of what is done? And if there be no Discovery of God's Acceptance, is he troubled and dissatisfied? And without some Intimation of God's Acceptance, doth nothing else quiet him; no, though his Ears should be filled with the Noise of the Acclamations and Applause of all the World? And if God any way manifest his Acceptation, and say in his Ear, *Well done good and faithful Servant*, is that enough to him? Is he quiet and at rest in his Mind though Men make no Discovery of their Acceptance or Approbation, yea though Men should despise him and hiss at him? If it be so with any Man, this is an undeniable Argument of his Sincerity. That Man who can be satisfied with nothing but God's Acceptance, and is satisfied with that alone, he, no doubt, aimed at pleasing

sing God and not Men in his Performances, and did what he did *heartily as unto God and not unto Men.*

Reflect upon your selves after Services of what Nature soever, whether they be those relating to God's more immediate Worship, or such Services and good Offices as relate to your Neighbour; consult your own Heart, and feel how the Pulse of it beats. Observe what you most look after, and what you are most satisfied with, or most troubled and disquieted for want of, whether God's Acceptance or Mens, and accordingly think of your self, accordingly judge of your Sincerity or Hypocrisie. This is a Character very easie to be observed in your self, and that cannot easily deceive you unless you are too willing to be deceived. Deal but honestly and impartially with your own Heart, and it will be no hard Matter for you to pass a true and right Judgment upon your self. And why should any Man desire to misjudge himself? Is any Man's Condition the better or the more safe, because he can make a Shift to think it better or safer than it is? Is it not rather so much the worse, so much the more unsafe, so much the more

more fearful and dangerous, because he will not see his Danger, but shuts his Eyes against it? If a Man's spiritual Estate be good, the sooner he sees it, and the more clear Evidence he hath of it, the better; for the sooner he will be comforted and satisfied therein, and the more Comfort and Satisfaction he will have in it: And if his Estate be bad, yet the sooner he knows it to be so, the better; for the sooner he is likely to get out of it. But he that is in a bad and dangerous Condition, and knows it not, is most likely to continue and perish in it; for till he be sensible of his Danger, he goes on in his Sin securely, and runs headlong upon his own Ruine. Oh, how happy were it for us all, if we were willing to know our selves, and that we did not seek to hoodwink, cheat and delude our selves to our Destruction!

And so I have done with that former Qualification of our Services, the Sincerity of them; of which much more might have been spoken, so much as to have taken up many Hours Discourse: But I intended not a full handling of that Subject on this Text, in which I have been long already; I come to the latter

latter Qualification of our Services, We must *serve God with a willing Mind*, or with *Cheerfulness*. By Nature we are averse from and indisposed to the Service of God; it is a Burthen, an intolerable Yoke and a meer Bondage to us. We cannot endure to come under Christ's Scepter and submit to his Government. We say of Christ, as they in the Gospel, *Luke 19. 14. We will not have this Man to reign over us*: And as they do, *Psal. 2. 3. Let us break his Bands asunder, and cast away his Cords from us*. But in our Conversion, in the *Day of his Power*, when he subdues us to himself, he changeth our Hearts, and makes us *a willing People*, *Psal. 110. 3.* When he effectually draws us by his Grace, then we cheerfully follow him, *we run after him*, *Levit. 1. 4.* He infuseth a new Nature and new Principles into our Souls, which may dispose and incline us to do that willingly and with Delight, which before was most unacceptable and irksome to us. And having thus new moulded and formed us, *Created us again to good Works*, as the Apostle speaks, *Eph. 2. 10.* he doth expect and require, that all our Services should, from this new Nature with which

which he hath endued us, be performed with Alacrity, and Cheerfulness.

Thus we shall find the Cheerfulness, Zeal, and Forwardness of God's People set forth in Scripture, with Relation to the times of the Gospel, *Isai. 2. 2, 3.* *It shall come to pass in the last Days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the Top of the Mountains, and shall be exalted above the Hills; that is, the Church of God under the Gospel shall be very eminent and conspicuous; and all Nations shall flow unto it; and many People shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths.* The Meaning is, they should cheerfully encourage, and zealously stir up and provoke one another to the Service of God. So again, the Alacrity and Forwardness of great Numbers of Converts hastening to come in to the Church, and join themselves to God's People, is notably described with Expressions of Admiration, *Isai. 60. 8.* *Who are these, that fly as a Cloud, and as the Doves to their Windows?* And again, *Isai. 44. 3, 4, 5.* *I will pour Water upon him that is thir-*

thirsty; and Floods upon the dry Ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy Seed, and my Blessing upon thy Offspring; and they shall spring up as among the Grass, as Willows by the Water-Courses: One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall subscribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and shall surname himself by the Name of Israel. They shall all cheerfully come in to the Church, and openly own and profess their Relation to God and his People. And this is that which we have as fully exprest by the Prophet Zachary, Chap. 8. 20, 21, 22, 23. It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come People, and the Inhabitants of many Cities: And the Inhabitants of one City shall go to another City, saying, let us go up speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I will go also: Yea many People and strong Nations shall come to seek the Lord in Jerusalem, (that is, in his Church wheresoever it be) and to pray before the Lord: In those Days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all Languages of the Nations, even shall take hold of the Skirt of him that is a Jew, (that is, who is a Jew indeed, a true Israelite, an owner and Worshipper of the true God,

a Professor

a Professor of the true Religion) *Ten Men shall take hold of his Skirt, saying, we will go with you: for we have heard, that God is with you. And do we not read in the new Testament, That the Kingdom of Heaven suffered Violence, and the Violent took it by Force? Matth. 11. 12. Men with a zealous Forwardness pressed on after the things of the Kingdom of God, as if they would lay violent Hands upon them; as Men resolved to have them, nothing should put them by. Thus the primitive Christians cheerful Attendance on the Service of God, and their comfortable Communion with one another therein is set forth unto us for our Imitation, Act. 2. 46. They continuing daily with one Accord in the Temple, and breaking of Bread from House to House, did eat their Meat with Gladness and Singleness of Heart. And the Bereans are commended as more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all Readiness of Mind, Acts 17. 11. And though it be true, that we have in divers Respects greater Encouragements to serve God cheerfully now under the Gospel than they had under the Law, the Love of God to*

us in Christ, and the Greatness of the Rewards of Obedience which God hath promised, being now more clearly revealed; yet even under the Law God required this Qualification of the Service of his People. *Serve the Lord with Gladness, come before his Presence with Singing, Psal. 100. 2. Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with Joyfulness and Gladness of Heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine Enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in Hunger and Thirst, and in Nakedness, and in want of all things, Deut. 28. 47, 48.*

But there are some special Duties and Services in which God in Scripture takes more Notice of his People's Cheerfulness, and urgeth it more frequently than in other Services.

As 1. In what they contribute towards the Furtherance of his publick Worship and Service. In the People's Offering towards the Building of the Tabernacle, how often is there Mention made of the Willingness of those who were to offer! *The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the Children of Israel, that they bring me an Offering; of every Man that giveth it willingly with his Heart*

Heart ye shall take my Offering, Exod. 25. 2. Every one whose Heart stirred him up, and whose Spirit made him willing, brought the Lord's Offering to the Work of the Tabernacle, Exod. 35. 21. The Children of Israel brought a willing Offering unto the Lord, every Man and Woman whose Heart made them willing, Ver. 29. In like Manner when David and his People offered towards the Building of the Temple, we may observe, that this Willingness is still mentioned. Who is willing (saith David) to consecrate his Service this Day unto the Lord? Then the chief of the Fathers, and the Princes of the Tribes of Israel, and the Captains of Thousands and of Hundreds, and the Rulers over the King's Work offered willingly, 1 Chron. 29. 5, 6. Then the People rejoiced, that they had offered willingly, Ver. 9. Who am I, saith David, and what is my People, that we should be able to offer so willingly! Ver. 14.

2. In publick Services and Imployments, that are undertaken for the promoting and furthering of God's Glory and the common Welfare and Concernments of Church or State. So in the Service of fighting God's Battles against Jabin King of Canaan, Judg. 5. 2. Praise

ye the Lord, saith Deborah, for the avenging of Israel, when the People willingly offered themselves. And again, Ver. 9. My Heart is towards the Governours of Israel, who offered themselves willingly among the People.

And 'tis delivered down to Posterity for the perpetual Honour of *Amaziah* the Son of *Zicbri*, *That he willingly offered himself unto the Lord, to be in Arms at Jerusalem for the Defence of that Place, where the Temple and publick Worship of God were seated, 2 Chron. 16. 17.* And no less honourable Mention is made of those who, upon the Return from the Captivity, in a time of much Hazard and many Difficulties, offered themselves voluntarily to reside in the City for the Safeguard thereof, against the Incursions of Enemies, by which they were threatned and alarm'd on every Side. *The People blessed all the Men, that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem, Nehem. 11. 2.*

3. In the Help and Relief we reach forth to such as are in Want, and whose pressing Necessities call upon us for Succours and seasonable Supplies. As there is scarce any Duty more prest in Scripture than this, I mean of the Duties of

of the second Table; so is our Willing-
ness and Cheerfulness in no Duty more
frequently insisted on than in this. If
there be among you a poor Man of one of
thy Brethren, within any of thy Gates, in
the Land which the Lord thy God giveth
thee, thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor
shut thy Hand from thy poor Brother;
but thou shalt open thy Hand wide unto
him, and thou shalt surely give him, and
thy Heart shall not be grieved when thou
givest unto him, Deut. 15. 7, 8, 10. To
the same Purpose are those Expressions,
of drawing out the Soil to the Hungry,
Isai. 58. 10. and of Loving Mercy; What
doth the Lord require of thee, but to do
justly, and love Mercy, and to walk humbly
with thy God? Mich. 6. 8. So in the new
Testament often. Every Man according
as he purposeth in his Heart, so let him
give, not grudgingly or of Necessity, 2 Cor. 9.
7. According as every Man purposeth in his
Heart so let him give; that is, let him follow
his own Inclinations, and do what he
is inwardly disposed and minded to do;
let no outward Consideration whatso-
ever, whether of Credit and Reputation
among Men, or hope to please any
Man, or Fear of displeasing any Man,
prevail with him to give more than he

can of his own Accord, and free Inclination give. *He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity, he that ruleth with Diligence, and he that sheweth Mercy with Cheerfulness, Rom. 12. 8.*

Now the Reasons why all our Services must be performed willingly and cheerfully, are because such Services are most acceptable to God, and most comfortable to us.

1. Cheerful Services are most acceptable to God. *He loveth a cheerful Giver 2 Cor. 9. 7.* God doth not so much value the thing we do, as the Manner how we do it; 'tis not the Quantity but the Quality of our Services which he regardeth. *If there be first a willing Mind, 'tis accepted according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not, 1 Cor. 8. 12.* He is better pleased with a little that comes freely, than with a great deal that is hardly wrung from a Man, and comes from him grudgingly, and with an ill Will. We our selves cannot endure an unwilling Servant, we rather choose to do things our selves many times, than to have them done sowerly and grudgingly by others. 'Tis no Pleasure, no Content at all to have such a Servant

thought

though he could in that sower Way do much more than another could do. But Cheerfulness makes us take small things in good part, while we consider the Mind and good Will of the Servant more than the Work that is done. 'Tis so with God, and thus doth he stand affected towards our Services: And 'tis well for us that 'tis so; for our best Services are but poor and sorry things, and of little Account, worth just nothing, but that God esteems of them much according to our Willingness, and according to the Mind and Affection from whence they proceed.

2. Willing Services are more easie and comfortable to us. What we do unwillingly and grudgingly, that goes on so heavily, as it is very burthenesome and toilsome unto us: But Cheerfulness and a willing Mind takes off the Toil and Burthen of Services, and makes them go on smoothly and pleasantly. Unwillingness makes small things grievous and intolerable; but Willingness makes great and difficult things light and easie, yea pleasurable and delightful. To apply what hath been spoken.

Use 1. This shews what Cause we have to be humbled for our Sin this Way: that we serve God so grudgingly and unwillingly; that we are apt to count the Time so long that is spent in his Service; that we say of his Service as those did, *Mal. 1. 13. What a Weariness is it?* That while we are taken up in the Duties of God's Worship, we are hankering and even longing to be at Liberty for our other Employments or Recreations, as it was with those of whom the Prophet speaks, *Amos 8. 5.* whose Language was, *When will the new Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat.* And not only in the Duties of God's Worship, but in any other publick Work or Employment in which we may be serviceable to God or our Generation, and promote the common Good, how backward and unwilling are we? how ready to put off and decline such Work, and to cast it upon any other Man's Shoulders? how hardly are we overcome and prevailed with, for the most part, to undertake any thing for God and his People, in which we must deny our selves and lay aside the Consideration of our own private Interests

rests, that we may be publickly useful !
But this our Backwardness to be service-
able to God is,

1. A great Dishonour to God whom
we serve ; for it is as much as if we
should say, that he is an hard Master,
and that we are ill at ease in his Service.
If we think our selves happy in being
entertained and employed by him, why
do we not serve him cheerfully, that all
may see how well we are pleased with
our Service, and what Content we
take in our Relation to so good a Master !

2. We hereby cast a Blot upon his
Service, and blemish that also ; for we
take a Course to make others, who are
Strangers to it, think it a very slavery
and toilsome Drudgery while we serve
him with such uncheerful and discon-
tented Minds, and discover our selves to
be so willing to be freed from his Ser-
vice and dispensed with for as much of it
as we can ; while we think the less we
do the better. What a Reproach is
this to the honourable and comfortable
Service of so good and kind a Master !

3. We hereby manifest, that we
have forgotten our Obligations to God,
and the great Reason we have to serve
him with all Readiness of Mind, and the
Reason

Reason that he hath to expect such Service from us. Hath he not given us our Being, and all our Strength and Abilities? Have we not received from him all the Powers and Faculties of Mind and Body with which we are endowed? Hath he not sustained and upheld us in our Being hitherto? Hath he not all along taken Care of us, provided for us? What one good thing ever had we all our Days, which we did not receive from his Hand? Whoever were the Means and Instruments of our Good, did not he act them, move them, and make Use of them to do us Good? Did they, or could they have done any thing for us, have been any Comfort or Help to us, without Order and Command from him? To say nothing of the great Work of our Redemption by his Son's Death, when we had undone and ruined our selves by Sin; Is not all our Dependance on God? and is it not he *in whom we live, move, and have our Being*? How is it then, that we should be so unwilling to serve him; who hath laid upon us so many Obligations thereto? If we should but give a poor Man his Diet and his Clothing constantly, and he should be unwilling to serve

serve us in what we might have Occasion of making Use of him; if he should grudge at every thing he doth for us, we would judge him a very unthankful Person, and think our Kindnesses ill bestowed on him. What Words then can sufficiently express our odious and horrid Ingratitude towards God, whom we serve so unwillingly, though he hath deserved a thousand times more of us, than 'tis possible any one Man should deserve of another!

And this our Ingratitude to God is yet farther aggravated by our Cheerfulness in the Service of other Masters, who have deserved no Service of us. We can pursue the World cheerfully and eagerly; we can serve our Lusts cheerfully; we can serve the Devil, God's Enemy and ours, cheerfully; only God, who infinitely deserves more than all the Service we are, or ever can be capable of doing him, is served with so much Backwardness, Ill-will and Reluctancy, not only as if he had deserved no Service at all at our Hands, but as if he had no Right or Power to command us; or, as if he did us a great Injury to require any Service from us. As if it were an Entrenchment upon our just
Liber-

Liberties, and an Attempt to deprive us of the Right we have to be our own Masters, and at our own Disposal.

Nay (you will say) that's too hard Charge; we are not those who either deny God's Sovereignty over us, and the rightful Power he hath to command us, or the many and great Obligations he hath laid upon us. Well, you do acknowledge these things indeed, and yet you carry your selves as if you denied them. For if you were of the Opinion, that you had never been in the least beholding to God, and that he did only usurp a Power over you, to command Service and require Homage where none was due, you could but serve him as you do; that is, by Constraint only, and not of a ready Mind; unwillingly and grudgingly, as Slaves do their tyranical Lords, who so serve them, as they are still in a Readiness to cast off their Yoke, make their Escape, and run away from them if they could but get an Opportunity. Considering what God hath been to us, and what he hath done for us; are we not ashamed to serve him in this Manner?

Use 2. Let us therefore be exhorted to serve God with a willing Mind. We want not Variety of cogent and forcible Inducements to prevail with us and engage us to serve him willingly, yea, with the greatest Alacrity and Cheerfulness.

For 1. The Service of God is the most honourable, the most comfortable, and the most profitable and beneficial Service that we can possibly be engaged in.

'Tis the most honourable Service. Men of the most noble Extraction and highest Quality in this World, think it an Accession to their Honour if they may be of the Retinue of Princes and Potentates, and especially if they may be dignified with the Favour of being admitted and preferr'd to give their constant and immediate Attendance on their Persons. Now if it be so honourable an Employment to be entertained in the Service of an earthly Prince, how much more honourable must the Service of him be, who is *Prince of the Kings of the Earth*? Rev. 1. 5. who is *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*? Rev. 17. 14.

Again, The Service of God is the most comfortable Service. If a Man quitting

quitting all other Masters, shall devote himself to the Service of God, and he shall serve him as he ought, that is to say, *with all Humility of Mind*, as *St. Paul* professeth he had done, *Act. 20. 19.* and with *Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart*, with Integrity and Faithfulness, as likewise the same Apostle affirmeth he had served him, *2 Cor. 1. 12.* He that shall thus devote himself to the Service of God, shall never want Encouragement from those inward Refreshings and spiritual Consolations which ever accompany and attend the Service of so good and kind a Master as God is. *In keeping his Commandments there is great Reward*, even this Way, *Psal. 19. 11.* These present Comforts is God pleased to give in here, while his Servants are at work in his Service, as part of their Wages, and as an Earnest of the full Payment hereafter; as an Earnest of that full and ample *Recompence of Reward*, as the Apostle expresseth it, *Heb. 11. 26.* which he hath promised to confer upon them, and make them Partakers of in another World, when *they shall rest from their Labours, and their Works* (that is, the Reward of their

their Works) shall follow them, Rev. 14.

13.

Add hereunto, that the Service of God also is the most profitable and beneficial Service. *In keeping his Commandments, as you just now heard, there is great Reward.* Great Reward here even in this Life; for *Godliness (saith the Apostle) true sincere Godliness, is profitable unto all things, having the Promise of the Life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4. 8.* But the chief Reward of all the faithful Servants of God is reserved to be conferr'd on them in another World, when they shall have finished their Course here, and when they shall have compleated their Ministration, and fully accomplished that Work and Service which God was pleased to assign to them. Our Saviour hath promised *to give unto every Man as his Work shall be:* When at his second Appearing he shall come to judge the World, he will come *with a Reward* in his Hand, to be bestowed upon all his faithful Servants, *Rev. 22. 12.* And it is a most Excellent, Rich, Glorious and transcendent Reward which he will then confer upon them, even *the Reward of the Inheritance, as it is called,*

called, Col. 3. 24. *The Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, Col. 1. 12. *An Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for them*, as St. Peter sets forth and describes that Inheritance, 1 Pet. 1. 4.

2. There are yet several other Encouragements to induce, persuade and engage us to serve God willingly and cheerfully. The Considerations that may further have Influence upon us to engage us to serve God with all Cheerfulness and Alacrity are many; which I shall not largely insist upon, but briefly sum them up together, little more than mentioning most of them. Such as are,

1. That the Eye of our Master in Heaven is still upon us to observe, and take Notice of, not only what we do in his Service, but likewise how we do it; to observe with what Frame of Heart we serve him; with what inward Willingness, with what Promptness and *Readiness of Mind*, as that Frame of Heart is expressed, Act. 17. 11. with what inward Alacrity and Cheerfulness we go on with our Work. Now this is a great Encouragement to faithful and wil-

Willing Servants, when they know that their Master's Eye is upon them, and that he observes with what Willingness and Cheerfulness they pursue and follow the Work which he hath enjoined them. And a far greater Encouragement it would be to them if they certainly knew and were well assured, that their Master could look into their Hearts, and could exactly discern how they were affected towards their Master's service, and with what Cheerfulness and Alacrity of Mind they manage it; All which God, *who searcheth the Heart and trieth the Reins*, is perfectly acquainted with.

2. God is most ready to help and assist his Servants in all their Services; especially whensoever he observes, that their Work is too hard for them, and that the Assistance and Help of another hand is so absolutely necessary, that they cannot go on with the Business, and perfect what they have undertaken without it. Now what greater Encouragement to a Servant, that is engaged in a Work which he finds to be above his Strength can there be, than to know, that his Master, who stands by and observes his Weakness and Disability to go on with his Work, is ready to

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help him at a dead Lift, and to lend him his Hand, when he sees that the Burthen is too heavy for him, and that his own Shoulders cannot bear up under it, unless supported and relieved by some other, who is in a Readiness to come in to his Assistance.

3. God mercifully overlooks the Failings and Miscarriages of his Servants that sincerely endeavour to serve their Master faithfully, *in the Integrity of their Hearts*, as David served him, *Psal. 72.* and with all their Power, as Jacob professeth he had served *Laban*, *Gen. 31.*

6. Though the Weaknesses and sinfull infirmities of such Servants in the Course of their Employments should be very many and great, yet is God so kind a Master, that he graciously overlooks and mercifully passeth by their manifold infirmities. *He is not extrem, or rigorously severe, to mark Iniquity*, *Psal. 136.*

3. He is not wont so narrowly to observe, and so exactly to animadvert upon all their Failings; as presently to lay down *Judgment to the Line, and Righteousness to the Plummets*; as God sometime threatened to deal with *Ephraim*, a most wicked, obstinate and incorrigible People, *Isai. 28. 17.* But so admirably

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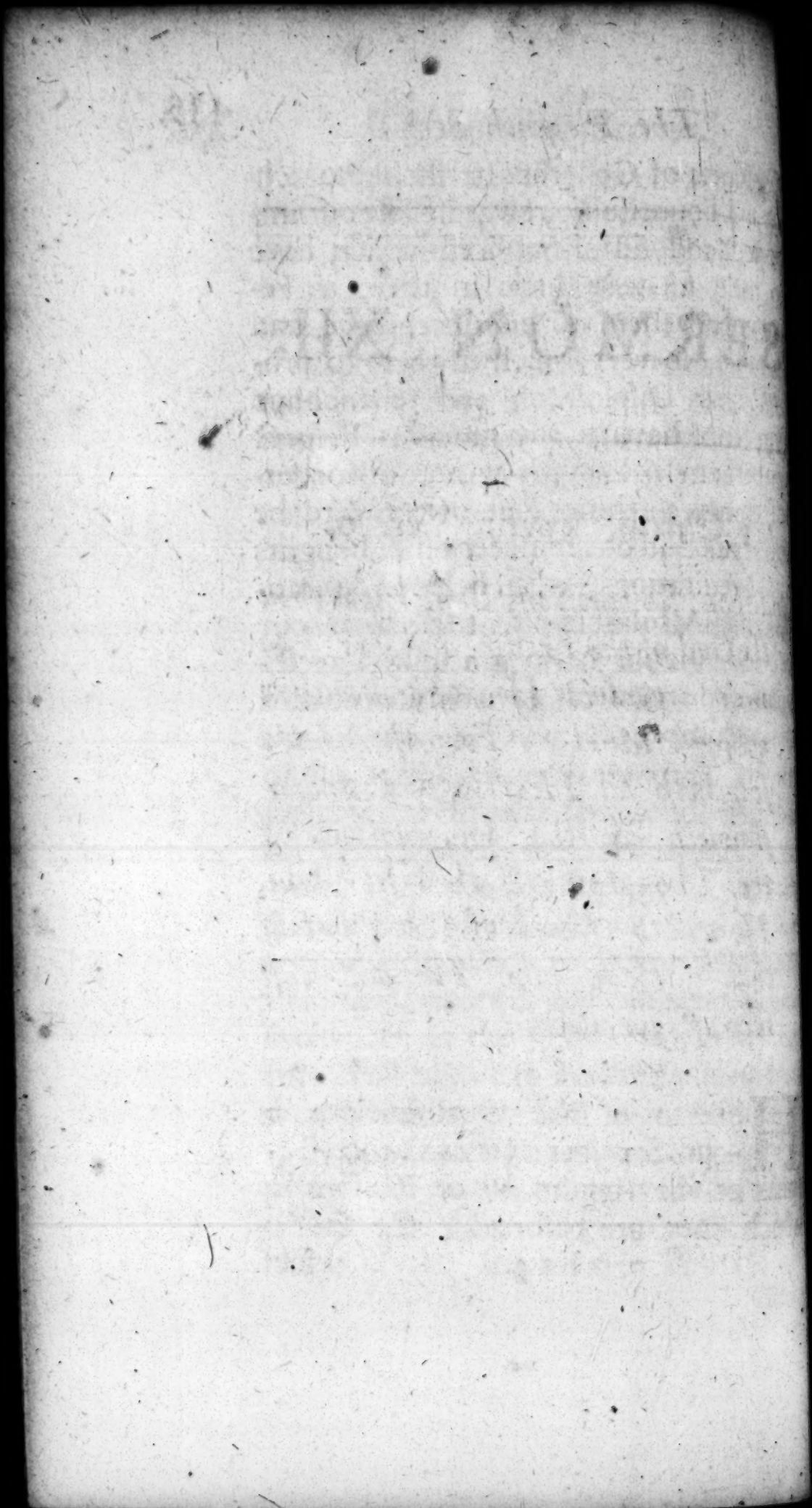
gracious and merciful is that God whom we serve, that *as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, as knowing their Frame, and remembering, that they are but Dust, Psal. 103. 13, 14. He spareth them as a Man spareth his Son that serveth him, Mal. 1. 17.* Now, all kind and tender hearted Parents know very well how they stand affected towards their Children; when they manifest but a real Willingness to do their Parents whatsoever Service they are able; their Love and Affection to their Children prevail with them to take small and inconsiderable things in good Part, as they come from them whom they dearly love and affect. Though there be little more in their Services to make them acceptable to their Parents, than their Willingness to do them Service if they were able; yet even this their Willingness is accepted, tho' perhaps, sometimes they utterly marr and spoil what they took in hand; though they spill a Cup of Wine or Beer, and break the Glass moreover which they were willing to have presented to their Father or Mother.

4. Our Master in Heaven is so kind and merciful to his Servants, that he most graciously accepts their Services notwithstanding all those Weaknesses and sinful Imperfections with which they are accompanied and attended; yet notwithstanding all those sinful Pollutions and Defilements with which they are sullied, and which render them most loathsome and abominable in the Sight of him *who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, Hab. I. 13.

5. He bountifully rewards all the weakest and most imperfect Endeavours and Performances of his faithful Servants. But of this, his rewarding the Service of his People, notwithstanding all the Defects and Imperfections, all the sinful Weaknesses and Infirmities with which they are accompanied; notwithstanding all the Pollutions and Defilements with which they are stain'd and deformed, marr'd and sullied, I have spoken under the first Head; and therefore shall not here need any further to enlarge on it.

Now, is it not a wonderful thing, a thing not to be seriously thought on or considered, without an holy Admiration of the unspeakable Bounty and Good-

Goodness of God, that he should so richly and bountifully reward those our imperfect and sinful Services, which have so little, so very little in them to recommend them to his Acceptance, and so much, so very much in them to provoke his Displeasure, and to disoblige him from having any gracious Respect unto them! I say, is it not a wonderful thing, a thing that deserves to be entertained in our most serious Thoughts and Meditations with holy Admirati- on and Astonishment, that such our Services should be so graciously accepted and resented, so richly rewarded and recompenced!



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SERMON XII.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

Hitherto of the Qualifications of our Services: I now proceed to speak of the Arguments or Reasons by which they are enforced; the first of

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which

which is drawn from the Omniscience of God; *For the Lord searcheth all Hearts and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.*

The Lord searcheth all Hearts; not as if he could be ignorant of what is in Man's Heart before he had, by Search into it, satisfied himself; 'tis only an Expression in which the Spirit of God condescends to our Capacities, speaking to us of God after the Manner of Men who must be at the Pains to search before they can attain an exact Knowledge of things. The Meaning of the Phrase applied to God, is only this; that God fully understands whatever is in Man's Heart, as if he had narrowly look'd into and search'd every Corner of it as we are wont to do when we would know a thing thoroughly. And of the same Import is the Phrase *trying the Reins*, so often used in Scripture. As the Heart, according to the Idiom of the *Hebrew* Tongue, is made the Seat of Understanding, so are the Reins of Desires and Affections. And the Trying of the Reins, signifies nothing else but God's perfect Knowledge of all the Desires and Affections of our Souls. And the Phrase is borrowed from the Probation or trying of Metals,

Metals, which when the Artist hath tried, whether by the Touch-stone, or the Furnace, he comes to understand what they are, and whether they be right and true in their kinds, or no.

He searcheth all Hearts. Some Mens Hearts are shallow, and their Counsels not so deeply laid, or so closely carried, but that they may be easily discerned; and some are plain-hearted, and do not much endeavour to conceal their Purposes. But others have a deep Reach, and are so wise and wary, or so cunning and deceitful, that they can hide their Counsels from others. He that hath the most piercing Understanding, and the most discerning Spirit, shall not be able to discover what is in their Hearts. But even these Mens Hearts, and all the Secrets of them, are fully known unto God; he searcheth *all Hearts*. Not the Shallower only, but the deepest and the most abstruse Hearts are full in his View, and nothing in them can be so secretly lodged, but his Eye espies it, and takes Notice of it.

And this is yet more fully exprest in what follows; *He understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts.* If we take Imaginations for the Workings of the Fancy,

Fancy, there is nothing more various and uncertain, nothing more sudden, nimble, volatile and transient than a Man's Phansie; how many things pass through a Man's Phansie, or imaginative Faculty in a Day, in an Hour! Who can take an Account of the various Workings of his own Phansie but for any little Space of Time? But now God takes Knowledge of every such Act of the Soul, how sudden, short and vanishing soever. No one Glance of the Imagination upon any Object can escape his Notice. If we render the *Hebrew* Word *רָאָה* by *Figment*, as some in this Place and in *Gen. 6. 5.* do, comprehending under it all the Machinations and Contrivances, all the secret Devices, Projects and Designs of a Man's Heart, and whatever secret Plots and Counsels are framed and minted there, the main Intention of the Expressions is still the same, and affords us this Point, *That God hath a most exact and perfect Knowledge of the Hearts of all Men.*

There are many Expressions, and there is much Variety of them in the Holy Scriptures, to set forth to us God's Knowledge of the Heart. *He looketh on the Heart, 1 Sam. 16. 7.* his Eye is intently
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fixed on it. *He ponders the Heart,* Prov. 21. 2. *He weighs the Spirits of Men,* Prov. 16. 2. *He trieth the Heart,* Prov. 17. 3. *1 Theff. 2. 4. His Eyes run too and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew himself strong in the Behalf of them whose Heart is perfect towards him,* 2 Chron. 16. 9. In which Place he is supposed to discern exactly, and most perfectly to understand what the secret Frame of their Hearts is, and how they stand affected towards him. So perfect is God's Knowledge of the Heart, that he sees at once, and, as it were, with one Glance of his Eye, whatsoever is in the Hearts of all the Men in the World; and not only so, but whatsoever has, at any time, formerly been in their Hearts; all the Imaginations, vain Phantasies, fruitless Thoughts, inordinate Motions, sinful Desires, wicked Projects and Designs, and in a Word, whatsoever Evil of any kind hath been in the Heart from a Man's Childhood: All these things, and the things which you never took Notice of, or which you have forgotten and lost, are all in his Eye, as full in his View, as if they were just now in your Heart.

Add hereunto, that he knows beforehand what will be in your Heart at any time,

time, or upon any Occasion; *He understandeth our Thoughts afar off*, Psalm 139. 2. He knows before-hand what Men will do upon all emergent Occasions, under all Circumstances, which way they will encline, and what Influence all Temptations will have upon them. When the *Israelites* had not as yet set Footing on the Land of *Canaan*, God seeing how they would demean themselves, when they should be actually possessed of it; he tells them, *that they would go a Whoring from him, and serve other Gods; and that they would forsake him, and break his Covenant*, Deut. 31. 16. Thus when *David* being doubtful how safe or unsafe it might be for him to trust himself with the Inhabitants of *Keilah*, consulted with God, saying, *Will Saul come down to Keilah, and will the Men of Keilah deliver me into Saul's Hand?* God answered him, saying, *Saul will come down to Keilah, and the Men of Keilah will deliver thee into his Hand*, 1 Sam. 23. 11, 12. Where we see, that God certainly foresaw, that *Saul* would come down to *Keilah*; and as certainly foresaw, that if *Saul* should come down thither, the Men

Men of *Keilah* would deliver *David* into his Hands.

Another Instance of like Nature we have in what is said concerning *Gog and Magog*, Ezek. 38. 10, 11. Where God having at large foreshewed and described the wicked and cruel Attempts of *Gog and Magog* against his Church and People, goes on and further adds, saying, *Thus saith the Lord God, It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy Mind, and thou shalt think an evil Thought. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the Land of unwalled Villages, &c.* Now, though learned Men are not agreed concerning *Gog and Magog*; though they differ among themselves, some of them being of Opinion, that *Antiochus Epiphanes*, and that mixed Multitude and confused Rabble, that out of all Nations almost served in his Army, might be understood by *Gog and Magog*; and though others incline to think, that the *Turks*; others, that the *Scythians* and *Tartars*, might rather be intended; and lastly, others, that all the Enemies of the Christian Church, under Antichrist, might be described under the Names of *Gog and Magog*, their Cruelties, inhuman Butcheries, and bloody

bloody Persecutions having equall'd the most barbarous and direful Cruelties of all the most blood-thirsty Enemies of the Church of God in former Ages : I say, though learned Men are not agreed among themselves, what Enemies of the Church of God should be understood by *Gog and Magog*, nor in what Ages of the World these Calamities should befall the Church of God ; yet clear it is, that this Prophecy, uttered by the Mouth of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, was not to have its Accomplishment till many hundred Years after the Days of the Prophet. And yet God here foreshows punctually and particularly, what the Thoughts, Deliberations and Counsels, what the Purposes and Resolutions of this most cruel and barbarous Enemy of the Church of God should be.

Now, this Knowledge of the Heart is peculiar to God, 'tis his Prerogative, a Jewel belonging to his Crown. Wherefore you shall find in Scripture, that he frequently assumes it and appropriates it to himself, *I the Lord search the Heart*, (saith he) *I try the Reins*, Jer. 17. 10. *I am He, which searcheth the Reins and Heart*, saith Christ, speaking of himself as God, Rev. 2. 23.

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This Royal Stile St. Peter gave him in Effect, when having been asked a third time, whether he loved Christ, and being thereupon grieved, he replied, *Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest, that I love thee,* John 21. 17.

Unto the Lord, as *Καρδιανόστος*, The *Knower of the Hearts*, the Apostles applied themselves and appealed, when being to choose another Apostle in the Room of Judas, they knew not who might be fittest for that Holy Office and sacred Trust. They knowing not the Hearts of Men could not judge who was best qualified for that Service. And therefore they prayed, saying, *Thou Lord, which knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew which of these two thou hast chosen, whether Barsabas or Matthias,* both which were set before them, and presented themselves at the Election.

And lastly, This Knowledge of the Heart is that which Solomon ascribes unto God, and emphatically appropriates to him, saying, *Thou, even thou only knowest the Hearts of all the Children of Men,* 1 King. 8. 39.

Men may indeed have some Knowledge of the Heart, but their Knowledge is infinitely short of that Knowledge of the

the Heart, which the Holy Scriptures ascribe unto God. For,

1. God only knows the Heart certainly and infallibly, whereas Men know it only conjecturally, and so may easily be, and often are, mistaken in their *Conjectures*.

2. God only knows the Heart intuitively, he only looks into the Heart, looks thorow it, and penetrates it; he only discerns whatsoever is in the Heart immediately and directly, without the Help of any thing else to guide him, lead him, or assist him therein: But Men know the Hearts of others discursively, gathering and collecting one thing from another, and that many times very weakly, not without much Error and Misprision.

3. God only knows the Hearts of Men universally; the Hearts of all Men, and whatsoever is in all their Hearts: But Mens Knowledge of the Heart reaches but a little Way; They know but a few Hearts, and but a few things in those Hearts, as being ignorant of much more than they know.

4. Men are so far from an exact and perfect Knowledge of the Hearts of other Men, that they know not their own Hearts; the Motions and Workings, the Thoughts,

Thoughts, Counsels and Contrivances whereof they are conversant with every Day.

(1.) Many things in a Day, which come into our Minds and pass through our Hearts, we take no Notice of.

(2.) Though we observe the Acts and Operations of our Soul, and the Motions of our Hearts, yet we understand not the Inducements and Motives thereunto: Or, if sometimes we take Notice of several Motives which had some Influence upon the Actings and Operations of our Hearts and Souls; yet we discern not which of those Motives had the chief Influence upon us. And this proceeds in great Part from our natural Blindness, and from our natural Self-love and Partiality to our selves.

But perhaps you may be here ready to object, that though Men, the wisest of Men, cannot search the Heart, or attain a perfect and exact Understanding of whatever is in the Heart; yet Angels, good and bad, who far excel us in Knowledge, possibly may.

Ans. It must be granted, that Angels may know much more of the Heart than Men can attain to know, as having divers great Advantages above Men; such as are,

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(1.) The Largeness of their Understanding, and the deep Reach they have to dive into the Secrets of Mens Hearts.

(2.) Their long Experience, the Experience of almost six thousand Years.

(3.) Being Spirits, they have a more immediate Access to our Souls, than any Man can have to the Soul or Heart of another Man.

(4.) As for evil Angels; they have ever since their Fall, most industriously and restlessly exercised themselves in observing, and in acquainting themselves with the Hearts of Men, that they might be the better able to seduce Men to over-reach them, and to draw them into Sin; that they might thereby ruin their Souls, and make them as miserable as themselves. But yet notwithstanding all these Advantages, they cannot come to be perfectly acquainted with the Hearts of Men.

Object. 2. But you will further reply that they can, very strangely and most cunningly suit their Temptation to the present Temper of Mens Spirits; and therefore it seems, that they must be perfectly acquainted with the Secrets of the Heart.

Ans. Here again it must be granted,

(1.) That they know the general corruption, with which the Nature of Men is leavened and tainted; and not only so, but they also know what particular Corruptions have formerly been most predominant in Men, and all are.

(2.) They know what Temptations have most frequently worsted them, and foil'd them in the Course of their Lives; they know by much Experience where they are weakest, and what Temptations they are least able to resist.

(3.) They can observe the Humours of the Body and the Motions of the Animal Spirits, whereby they can shrewdly guess at the present Temper and Disposition of the Heart. But yet still so, they fall very short of any such perfect, exact, universal, and infallible knowledge of the Heart, as the Scriptures ascribe unto God. And hence it is, that though in the Temptations with which they assault Men, and the every Darts which they cast at them, they often hit the Mark, yet they also very often miss their Mark and shoot at random.

And this may suffice to have been spoken to shew, that no Creature, no Angels themselves, are indow'd with a perfect and infallible Knowledge of the Heart. Wherefore this eminent Perfection is proper and peculiar to God alone, as has been at large demonstrated. I shall however add a few other Arguments to confirm this great and weighty Truth, and then proceed to make some Application of it.

Argument 1. God must needs be endued with the most perfect Knowledge that any Being is capable of; for in him are found all imaginable Perfections. And therefore the perfect Knowledge of the Heart, being an eminent and glorious Perfection, must needs belong to him, or else he could not be God, that is to say, he could not be an absolute perfect and the most excellent Being, if any possible Perfection were wanting in him.

Argument 2. God made and framed the Heart; and therefore he must of Necessity be perfectly acquainted with it. Now, as the *Psalmist* reasoneth, *He that planted the Ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the Eye, shall not he see?* *Pl.* 94. 9. Even so, or much to the same Effect, may we reason concerning the

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matter now under Consideration: If God frame and fashion the Heart, must he not perfectly understand the Heart and all the Secrets thereof? He whose Art and Skill composeth and frameth a Watch, and sets together all the Parts of it, must needs understand all the little Wheels and Pins, all the Springs, and Instruments of Motion belonging to it: how much more then, must God perfectly understand the Heart, together with all the Motions and Operations thereof, and what the Rise and Springs of all those Operations are; forasmuch as they are all compos'd and framed by him!

Argument 3. God concurs with and directs all the Actions of the Creature; *In* *we live, and move, and have our Being,* Act. 17. 28. He does not only uphold the Creature in his Being, *Heb. 1.* (*All things consisting by him,* Coloss. 17.) but also, he actually concurs with them in all their Operations, so far as they are purely natural, and not supernatural. If he shall withhold and suspend his Concourse and Influence, the Creature cannot act; without him it cannot stand forth and exert it self in those Actions that are most natural; *the Iron,*

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though an heavy Body, cannot sink, King. 6. 5, 6. If he with-hold his Influence, the Fire cannot burn, Dan. 3. 25. In a Word, as all the Creatures have their Being and Faculties from him, so they have their Dependance on him for the Exercise of those Faculties. And hence we may most certainly infer, That there can be nothing in the Heart of Man, no habitual Disposition or Inclination, no Motion or Action, but what must needs be exactly and perfectly known to God.

Argument 4. God is the Judge of the World; and shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right? Gen. 18. 25. The Judgment of God is a *Righteous Judgment* Rom. 2. 5. But now, How could he pass righteous Judgment, unless he looked into Mens Hearts, and exactly understood whatsoever is in the Heart?

For (1.) The things which lie hid in the Heart, are a great part of the things to be judged. In the great and dreadful Day of our Appearance before the Judge of the World, *God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ*, Rom. 16. *Then shall God bring every Work to Judgment, with every secret thing,*

ther it be good, or whether it be evil, Eccl. 12. 14.

(2.) As for the external Works and Actions of Men, seeing the Degree of the Goodness or Sinfulness of them dependeth on the secret Frame of the Heart, there is no Possibility of Mens being judged according to their Works, unless Mens Hearts be known. What good is done by Men may, in some Measure, be known by such as are conversant with them, and are Witnesses of their Conversation; but how it is done, from what inward Frame of Heart, with what Sincerity, from what Principles, upon what Motives, and to what Ends; This can never be exactly and perfectly known by any, but by him alone, who is the *Searcher of the Heart*. So for evil Actions in like Manner, with what Degree of Hatred and Ill-Will, with what Degree of Malice, Revenge, and Malignity of Spirit any thing is done; and, consequently, what Degree of Punishment it deserves, can only be known by him, whose Eyes pierce into the Heart. And hence it is, that the Scriptures often join these together, God's *judging Men*, and his *Searching the*

Heart and trying the Reins. So 1 Kings 8. 39. Jer. 17. 10. and Rev. 2. 23.

Argument 5. God's Servants frequently appeal to him touching the Frame of their Hearts and what is in them: Thus *Hezekiah*, having received a Message of Death, betakes himself to God in Prayer, saying, *I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in Truth and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy Sight,* 2 King. 20. 3. Thus the Prophet *Jeremiah* appealed unto God concerning his Integrity and the Uprightness of his Heart, *Thou, O Lord, knowest me, (saith he) Thou hast seen me, and tried mine Heart towards thee,* Jer. 12. 3. And thus *St. Peter* appealed unto Christ, the Searcher of Hearts and the Trier of the Reins for the Truth and Sincerity of his Love to Christ, *Lord, (saith he) Thou knowest all things, thou knowest, that I love thee,* John 21. 17. Now by these their Appeals to God, they all in Effect acknowledged him to be the Searcher of their Hearts. Had they not believed him to be so, in vain had they made any such Appeals unto him.

Use 1. We may hence learn, how much it concerns us to keep our Hearts clean and free from the Pollution of Sin: especially how careful we ought to be, that we allow not or willingly harbour any Sin in our Hearts. Many, though they will not break forth into the external Acts of some Sins, for some Reason or other restraining them and holding them in, yet retain and cherish a secret Affection for such Sins, and bear good Will towards them; so that if outward Restraints were removed, and fit Opportunities were offered, they would readily comply with any Temptation to them. Now, God who searcheth the Heart, takes Notice of this secret and close Hankering of their Hearts after Sin. And in his Account, a Man hath in his Heart committed that Sin, which he hath a secret Desire and a Mind to commit, if no outward Inconvenience hindered him. This is that which our Saviour expressly affirmeth concerning Lust, *Matth. 5. 28. Whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery already with her in his Heart.* And there is the same Reason for all other Sins. As far as we entertain and cherish the Love of them
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in our Hearts, so as there is an inward Readiness and Preparedness to commit them if Occasion were offered, so far are we in Heart guilty of them in God's Account. As then the Eye of Man keeps us in Awe, and with-holds us from the actual Commission of Sins that would bring Shame and Reproach upon us before Men; so should God's Eye keep us from all inward Compliance with any Sin in our Hearts. Yea the Eye of God alone should restrain us much more powerfully and effectually from all secret Correspondence with Sin, than the Eyes of all the Men in the World would from any outward Acts of Sin. For,

1. God's Eye is a most pure Eye, and cannot behold Sin without the highest Degree of Hatred and Abomination: Whereas Men have the Seeds and Principles of the same Sins in their own Nature, and therefore cannot be supposed to hate them with such a perfect Hatred as God bears against them. And moreover many of them, it may be, are actually guilty of the same Sins in some Degree or other, and in that Regard also are more favourable towards them.

2. Men for the most Part have no Power to punish the Sins which they
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take Notice of; and if they had Power to punish, yet perhaps the Sins may be such as are not punishable by any humane Law: But God is the universal Judge and Governour of all the World, and the Laws by which he judgeth reach all Sin: No Sin so small and inconsiderable, none so secret or so closely carried but it is within the Compass of his Law, and comes under his Jurisdiction and Cognizance.

3. Men may by some undue Consideration or other be prevailed with to forbear to censure Offenders according to the Demerit of their Offences: But nothing can prevail with God to take him off from the Execution of Justice, besides unfeigned Repentance and Faith in Christ.

4. Mens Sentence reacheth only to the inflicting of some Temporal Evils; the utmost of their Power goes no further than to the taking away of the temporal Life of the Offender; they can only *kill the Body*, but God hath Power to *destroy both Soul and Body in Hell*. Whence is it then, that Men are not at all troubled, that God sees all the secret Abominations of their Hearts, whereas they would be even confounded with
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Shame if any Man should see but one Quarter of what God discovers, yea if but a Child should be conscious to what is within them? That it is even thus, is most apparent; and that it should be so, may be just Matter of Admiration, if Men believe there is a God, and that he is omniscient, and of infinite Holiness and Purity. And the best Account hereof that can be given is, that it proceeds from that desperate Atheism, or Irreligion and Prophaneness that is in their Hearts. For either,

(1.) They do not firmly and steadily believe there is a God, though they are not without some natural Impressions of it upon their Hearts. Or,

(2.) They do not believe him to be the Searcher of the Heart, and the Trier of the Reins. Or,

(3.) They do not thoroughly and stedfastly believe his Justice and Holiness, the perfect Hatred and Abomination he hath of all Sin, and his unchangeable Purpose of punishing it, unless true Repentance, sound Reformation, and the Application of Christ's Satisfaction by Faith intervene. Now, as far as any of these is not soundly believed, so far there still remains the bitter Root of cursed Atheism
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in the Heart: For God being known to us by his Attributes, as far as we doubt of or question them, we also call in Question his Being, despoil him of his Omniscieny, Justice and Holiness, and so he ceaseth to be God; though you may call him God, yet you make him but an Idol, a Fiction of your own Brain.

Or, (4.) If you do indeed believe that there is a God who knows all things, who searcheth Hearts and trieth Reins, before whom all things are open and naked, and whose Holiness is such as he cannot look upon Sin without Indignation, and whose Justice is such as that no Sin shall ever pass unpunish'd; and yet, notwithstanding all this you can allow your self to cherish secret Sins in your Heart, it argues an high Degree of desperate Prophaneness. For what is this but to affront God's Omniscieny, Holiness, and Justice, and to bid Defiance to his Attributes! Chuse which you will, you who stand more in Awe of a Child's Eye than you do of God's Eye, either you do not believe the Being, Justice, and Holiness of God, and then you are a plain Atheist; or, you do verily believe these things, and yet you fear not to give those Sins a Room in your Heart which
you

you know God abhors, and will most severely and eternally punish; and then your Prophaneness and Contempt of God is desperate. Your Case is not that of him, *Psal. 14. 1. Who hath said in his Heart there is no God*, and thereupon takes Liberty to allow himself in Sin; You believe there is a God: Nor do you say as he, *Psal. 10. 11, 13. God hath forgotten, he hideth himself, he will never see it; God will not require it*: You acknowledge the all-seeing Eye, the Providence and Justice of God: You say not in your Heart as he, *Psal. 50. 21. that God is altogether such a one as your self*, that he is not such an Enemy to Sin as some would make him, and from thence encourage your self in the Allowance of secret Sins: No, your Case is incomparably worse, and your Heart more desperately wicked; for you profess to acknowledge a God, and to believe whatever the Scripture saith of his Omniscience, his searching the Heart, his Holiness and Justice, and yet without all Fear of this all-seeing, Heart-searching, most just and holy God; you allow your self in secret Sin, and harbour that within you fearlessly and shamelessly, in Respect of God's Eye, which would make you blush

blush and hide your Face, if any Man's Eye could pierce into your Heart to take Notice of it.

But you will say, I hope there are none such amongst us: None so desperately wicked.

It's not fit that we should be too forward to judge of Mens Hearts, as I shall after shew; but yet when the Wickedness of Mens Hearts, is discovered by their Lives, we may. Our Saviour hath taught us, *Matth. 15. 19.* that all the Wickedness that is observable in Mens Conversations proceeds from the Wickedness of the Heart. And *Solomon* hath told us, *That from the Heart are the Issues of Life, Prov. 4. 23.* So that look what a Man's Life is, such is his Heart. From this Ground it was, that *David* concluded Men of wicked Lives to be void of the Fear of God, to be destitute of any true Grace within. *The Transgression of the Wicked saith in my Heart, there is no fear of God before his Eyes, Psal. 36. 1. Saith in my Heart,* that is, doth as it were declare, speak out and discover so much to my Reason, so as I clearly collect and gather it from what I observe in their Actions. But if there be no such outward Discovery of the Wickedness of
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Mens Hearts by their Lives, it would be great Rashness to pass Sentence and judge of what we see not, nor can see, touching the Heart of any particular Man: but in the general, we are sufficiently assured from Scripture, that there are many who, under a Shew and outward Appearance of much Innocency and Unblameableness, secretly allow themselves in Sin, as if the Eye of God were much less to be heeded or regarded than the Eye of Man. Now to such as these I speak in the general, tho I take not upon me to be able to discern who they are. Though I know them not, yet let all those who are conscious to themselves of their own Guilt, if any such be here, apply it to themselves. And there are only three or four things which I shall at present propose to be seriously considered of by such.

I. That 'tis a very strange and high Degree of Hardness of Heart that such Men have attained unto, and if they should long persevere and go on therein, it would be a Matter of greatest Difficulty, and even a Miracle of Mercy ever to recover out of it. The Apostle speaks of some Sinners whose *Consciences*

are

are seared as with a hot Iron, 2 Tim. 4. 2. And of others who, through a continued Custom in Sin, are *past feeling*, such a Brauniness hath a long Course of Sin contracted, and drawn over their Hearts, Eph. 4. 19. And certainly if any Persons may be said to have seared Consciences, and to be even past feeling, then may these, who believing, that the Eye of an all-seeing, heart-searching, just and holy God is still upon them, yet dare allow themselves in secret Sins, which they would not that the World should know of for a World.

2. Such Men are in some Respect much worse than plain Atheists would be; for they who neither believe there is a just and righteous God that knows their Hearts; nor, that there are any Rewards or Punishments in another World, so far as they can attain to be of this atheistical Perswasion, have nothing to awe them, and therefore 'tis no wonder if they make Conscience of nothing, but freely give themselves up to all Manner of Licentiousness: But those other believing there is an all-knowing, just and holy God, who is the Governour and Judge of the World, yet dare contemn him and affront him to his Face.

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3. Let such as fear the Shame and Censures of the World, but care not for the Eye of God; consider how easie it is for God, who sees all the secret Wickedness of their Hearts, to bring it forth and lay it open to the View of all the World. He can, if he please, make their own Consciences to fall upon them, so as they shall become their own Accusers. He can fill their Souls with such unexpressible Horrors and dreadful Sense of their inward and secret Guilt, as they shall be enforced to proclaim their Shame to all they meet with: Or, he can give them up to such a reprobate Sense, as they shall not stick to commit those Sins openly, in which now they only allow themselves in Secret. And what can be more just, than that they who stand more in Awe of the Eye of the World than of the Eye of God, should at length arrive to that Degree of shameless Impudency, as to stand in Awe of neither, but publicly own, and wallow in their Wickedness, and glory in their Shame in the Sight of the Sun?

4. However the secret Abominations of their Hearts, may never be laid open and exposed to the View of the World here, yet there is a Day of reckoning here-

Hereafter, when Men and Angels shall see what hath here been so warily carried and so closely kept and shut up from the Eyes of others; there is a Day coming when *The Searcher of Hearts* shall bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret thing, Eccles. 12. 14. When God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the Counsels of the Heart, 1 Cor. 4. 5. When he will judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ, Rom. 2. 16. If nothing else will do it, let the Consideration of that great and terrible Day strike Terror into the hearts of such as please themselves in the Secresie of their Sins, and make them so stand in Awe of the Eye of their seeing Judge here, as they may not but feel the Effects of his severe Justice hereafter.

Use 2. Let us therefore labour to get sound and firm Belief of this great Truth, That God is the Searcher of the Heart, perfectly seeing and Understanding whatsoever is in it. And without let us endeavour to keep the Thoughts and Sense of it still upon our hearts. We may believe it, but little love it; we do not endeavour to set

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God's all-seeing Eye still before us. If we did, how many Sins would this prevent! How many sinful Motions would it stifle in the very Conception! And how many Temptations would it beat back, that now prevail over us, and are too hard for us! In Truth, this our Weapon if it were ever in a Readiness would enable us to resist any Temptation that might assault us. Having the Omniscience of God still before our Eyes, we should be ever in a Readiness to reply upon the Incurfion of any Temptation, How can I do such or such a thing when God's Eye is upon me? And this Consideration will be so much the more effectual to restrain us from sinning against God, if we remember, that God's Eye is not only an all-seeing and heart-searching Eye, but a holy and jealous Eye, a most just and Sin-revenging Eye: That God is not an idle Spectator, but that he narrowly heeds and observes all things, to the end he may write them down in his Book, and keep a Register of them, as the Scripture speaks of him after the Manner of Men, and is wont to represent him to our Understandings. *He searcheth the Heart, and trieth the Reins,* that he may give

every Man according to his Works (as hath been said before) Rev. 2. 23. The Want of our firm Belief of this important Truth, is that which makes us disregard and contemn this all-seeing Eye so much as we do.

Though we believe he sees us, yet we do not in Truth believe him to be a God of that Purity and Holiness, and of that exact Justice and Severity against all Sin, as he hath in his Word revealed and declared himself to be. We are too apt to think, that all his Denunciations of Judgment and severe Threatnings against Sin, are only a little to scare and fright us for the present, and that at last, we shall find God much more mild and merciful, even to the worst of Sinners, than those Threatnings would seem to make us believe he is. Were there not some such pernicious Opinion as this at the Bottom of Mens Hearts, it were impossible, that they should slight the Eye of God, and be so regardless of it as they are. Job durst not have done it, *Because Destruction from God was a Terror to him, and by Reason of his Highness he could not endure*; so he himself professeth, Job 31. 23. The People of God durst not do it: If we

have forgotten the Name of our God (for they) shall not God search this out, for he knoweth the Secrets of the Heart: Psalm 44. 20, 21.

Use 3. Let us hence be exhorted to serve God sincerely and willingly. To this end is God's searching the Heart here mentioned. Men may see what we do, but not how we do it; and hence often *what is highly esteem'd among Men is Abomination in the Sight of God*, in regard of the evil Frame of the Heart; *Luke 16. 15.* So in Prayer or Fasting, or in giving of Alms, Men who cannot see the Heart may give their highest Approbation and Applause to what is done; but if it be done vainly, gloriously and hypocritically, as the *Pharisees* prayed and gave Alms, *Matth 6. 1, 2, 5.* God loaths and abhors all that is so done, how specious and glorious soever it may appear in the Eyes of Men.

1st, Therefore let this make us sincere. How many base and unworthy Ends may there be in the best Actions which God espieth, though Men cannot take Notice of them. And this base and corrupt Frame of the Heart makes

makes that *stink in the Nostrils of God*, which, with Men, is in highest Esteem and Account.

2dly, Let this make us also willing and cheerful in the Service of God. We may seem very forward and zealous in God's Service as far as Men can discern, and yet there may be another Frame within. What inward Backwardness and Grudgings may there be, as if we did too much for God! What secret Desires to be excused and dispenc'd with when any thing is to be done in which we must deny our selves! while in the meantime, we seem outwardly to address our selves to our Duty with much Alacrity and Cheerfulness. But God sees this evil Frame of our Hearts, and values our Services accordingly. He takes small Pleasure in what comes from us with such an Ill-will. 'Tis not for nothing, that *David* joins these two, Sincerity and Willingness, and links them together, for they must go hand in hand, or else our Services will not be fully acceptable to God.

There may be indeed some Degree of Sincerity, and yet much Heaviness and Littlefness in God's Service. This is that which every Sound and

sincere Heart must be humbled for and strive against: And where the Soul is troubled for it, and burdened with it, where 'tis unfeignedly bewailed and labour'd against, there God doth mercifully overlook it. Where our Deadness, Sloth, and sinful Indisposition, Backwardness and Drowsiness are an Affliction to us, God doth not impute these Distempers and Miscarriages to us, but mercifully, through Christ, accepts the Will for the Deed. And thus much we may gather from that kind and gracious Speech of our Saviour, in which he doth, as it were, make an Apology for the Sleepiness of his Apostles, saying, *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak*, Matth. 26. 41.

Again, there may be a kind of Willingness to serve God (such as it is) where there is no Sincerity; There are divers sorts of Willingness to serve God, which being void of Sincerity, are in God's Esteem nothing worth.

1. There may be a proud and vain-glorious Willingness, when Men would be employed that they may set up themselves in the Eyes and Estimation of others; that they may make Ostentation of those things in themselves which they vainly and fondly over-value. And

none

none are more vain-glorious or more apt to over-value themselves than those who are weakest. 'Tis indeed almost an inseparable Companion of Weakness for Men to be fond of their own things, and to be full of self-Admiration; whereas the stronger any Man is, the more soberly hath he learn'd to think of himself.

2. There is an ambitious Willingness to do Service, when Men's Aim is thereby to advance themselves in the World, that they may *set their Nests on high*, as the Prophet speaks. None more forward than *Jehu*, to be an Instrument for the Execution of those Judgments which God had threatn'd against the House of *Ahab*: But all his Forwardness and pretended Zeal was for the exalting and establishing himself and his Family: Unless all the House of *Ahab* were cut off he could not be safe in the Throne, nor the Succession of his Posterity firmly secured. This made him so willing and zealous a Servant for the Execution of the Sentence which God had threatned and pronounc'd against *Ahab's* Family; And right glad was he, no doubt, that he had so fair a Pretence for carrying on his own Designs under a Colour of being serviceable unto God. Wherefore
when

when he had done his own Work, when now he thought he had sufficiently established and secured himself and his Posterity, *Jehu* took no further Care to be any longer serviceable to God. *He took no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of Israel with all his Heart; for he departed not from the Sins of Jeroboam the Son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin,* 2 Kings 10. 31.

3. A contentious Willingness to be employed, not so much to serve God, as to oppose his Servants. Such was their Willingness to preach the Gospel; whom the Apostle describes, *Phil. 1. 16. who preached Christ out of Contention, intending thereby to add Affliction to the Apostles Bonds.*

4. There is a covetous Willingness, when Men make only an Advantage of the Service of God for enriching themselves, and with those of whom the Apostle complains, *Phil. 2. 21. Seek their own things, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

5. There is a needy Willingness to serve God, when Men betake themselves to his Service, not with Respect to God's Glory, but merely to get a Livelihood; as those, *1 Sam. 2. 36. who labouring under*

under Penury, and being reduc'd to a low and indigent Condition, should say, *Put me, I pray thee, into one of the Priest's Offices, that I may eat a Piece of Bread:* who turn the Service of God into a Trade.

None of these is that Willingness which God regards; 'tis a sincere Willingness that he looks after, when the Honour of God is not only pretended, but is indeed the principal thing that is aimed at; and when the Work of God, for the Works Sake, is made the Matter of our Choice, and not the Work for Wages, or for any other Advantage that may accrue to us thereby. Now, though Men cannot look into our Hearts, and see what sets us a-work, yet God doth; and the Consideration hereof should make us, both sincere and willing in our Attendance on whatsoever Service he is pleased to assign us or engage us in.

Use 4. Is God the Searcher of the Heart, and is it his sole Prerogative to be so? Let us all then be cautioned, that we usurp not God's Prerogative; that we presume not to thrust our selves into his Throne, by judging the Hearts of Men where God's Providence hath made no Discovery thereof. (r.)

(1.) This were a great Boldness and an Affront to the Majesty of God. So it is with Men, for private Persons to usurp the Royalties and Prerogatives of Princes.

(2.) 'Tis the Way to expose our selves to the Judgments of God, and to the hard Censures and uncharitable judgments of Men. Thus much we may collect from what our Saviour threatens against this Practice: *Judge not*, saith he, *that ye be not judged, for with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what Measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*, Matth. 7. 1, 2.

(3.) We our selves much need the Charity of others, as in Regard of the manifold Weaknesses, Infirmities and sinful Miscarriages which we are subject to, so also in Regard of the many dark and doubtful Circumstances into which the Providence of God often casts us; in which dark and doubtful Cases, how great soever our Innocency and Integrity may be, yet we cannot make it out to the World, unless the Charity of others relieve us. Add hereunto, that for the most part none are more apt to pretend to see into the Hearts of others, than they who are least acquainted with their own Hearts.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

NOW follows the second Argument by which *David* would prevail with *Solomon* to serve God with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind: *If thou seek*

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seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

This Argument hath two Branches: In the former of which the singular Benefit and Advantage of serving God in that Manner is represented unto Solomon in those Words, *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.*

In the second Branch, the extream Danger of his neglecting to serve God in that Manner, is laid before him in these Words, *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.* Of both these Branches I shall speak in Order, as they lie in the Text.

I begin with the former Branch, containing the singular Benefit of serving God sincerely and cheerfully; or, with a perfect Heart and willing Mind; *If thou seek him, he will be found of thee.*

Seeking God is not always alike taken in Scripture. Sometimes 'tis taken in a stricter Sense, for addressing our selves to God in Prayer: So *Isai. 55. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* And so likewise, *Psal. 63. 1. Thou art my God, early will*

will I seek thee. And so in many other Places.

Sometimes again, 'tis taken more largely, for a diligent and studious applying of our selves to the Service of God in the whole Course of that Duty which God requires of us. And thus it is taken here; for it is opposed to forsaking God. As also *Ezra 8. 22.* *The Hand of our God is upon them for Good, that seek him; but his Power and his Wrath is against all them that forsake him.* And thus 'tis said of *Hezekiah*, that in every Work which he began in the Service of the House of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandments to seek his God, he did it with all his Heart, and prospered, *2 Chron. 31. 21.*

Then as for the other Term that answers to *seeking*; namely, God's being *found of us*, That notes any gracious Discovery or Manifestation of God's Favour to us; which may be many ways, all which may be referred to these two Heads; either inwardly and more immediately to our Souls, by speaking Peace unto us, by lifting up the Light of his Countenance upon us, and the like; or outwardly, in the visible Fruits and Effects of his Favour,
either

either removing Evils, or conferring good things upon us.

On the contrary, when God doth not one way or other make Discovery of his Favour to us, then, in the Language of the Scripture, he is said to *hide his Face from us*, Psal. 13. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me (O Lord) for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy Face from me?* And so likewise, Psal. 30. 7. *Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled.* Hence it is, that in such Cases God's People are said to *seek his Face*, as if they had for the present lost the Sight of God. So 2 Chron. 7. 14. and Psal. 27. 8.

Now, whether we take seeking God in the larger Sense, or in the Stricter, the Promise in the Text reacheth both; They who seek him in either Sense, shall be sure to find him; but especially they, who seek him in a Way of sincere and universal Obedience, (which is the Seeking principally intended in this Place) shall be sure to find him. This, I say, seems to be the Seeking of God principally intended in the Text, though our Seeking him by Prayer and Humiliation for Sin, (which two should ever go together, and accompany one another) may not be supposed to be wholly

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excluded; yea rather, we must conceive it to be necessarily included therein, Prayer being a principal Part of that Duty and Service which we owe unto God. Wherefore, that I may be sure to take in the whole Compass and Intendment of the Words, I shall speak a little to both.

I. They that seek God by Prayer, and by that sound and sincere Humiliation for Sin, which should ever attend Prayer, shall find him. This is a Truth so much insisted on in Scripture, as nothing more. The Promises made to Prayer in Scripture are so many, that it would take up much Time to mention them all, and to enlarge upon them. I shall recite some of them. *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me, Psal. 50. 15. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him; to all that call upon him in Truth: He will fulfil the Desire of them that fear him; He also will hear their Cry and will save them, Psal. 145. 18, 19. The Eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Cry, Psal. 34. 15. Ask, and it shall be given you: Seek, and ye shall find: Knock, and it shall*

shall be opened unto you, Matth. 7. 7, &c. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, John 14. 13. This is the Confidence that we have in him, (that is, in Christ immediately before spoken of) That if we ask any thing according to his Will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the Petitions that we desired of him, 1 John 5. 14, 15 These and many other Promises may assure us, that our Prayers shall not miscarry, but be graciously answered, if we pray as we ought.

And as we have many Promises to encourage us to pray, and strengthen our Faith in Prayer; so we have no less Encouragement from Experience.

1. If we be such as have addicted our selves to Prayer, and have carefully observed how we speed in Prayer, our own manifold Experiences of God's signal Answers to our Prayers, upon all Occasions, will abundantly satisfy us, that he is a *God bearing Prayer*, Psal. 65. 2. *and rich unto all that call upon him*, as the Apostle speaks, Rom. 10. 12. And that *he hath not said unto his People, Seek ye me in vain*, Isai. 45. 19.

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2. The many remarkable Experiments which we have in the Holy Scriptures, of God's answering the Prayers of his People, are yet a further and higher, and more effectual Confirmation of the Efficacy of Prayer, and that we shall never fail to obtain those Answers to our Prayers, if rightly fram'd, and duly presented and offered up to him, which shall really conduce to the Furtherance of his own Glory, and our Good. These Experiments left upon Record in Holy Scripture are so well known to us, or to many of us, as I shall not at present need to enumerate them, but leave it to the Care of every sincere Christian and sound Believer to call them often to Mind, to meditate on them, and to improve them for the strengthening of Faith in Prayer.

Use 1. This should greatly encourage us to Prayer, and make us uncessant and unwearied therein. This is certainly one special Cause, among others, of our Slackness and our Fainting in Prayer, that we do not firmly believe, that God will be found of those who seek him. And therefore we may observe, That our Saviour, as he often presseth the Duty of
112 Prayer,

Prayer, and earnestly calls upon us for it; so understanding very well what is the Root of our Slackness and Inconstancy, of our Languishing and Weariness, of our Fainting in Prayer, of our Aptness to sit down discouraged, if our Prayers be not presently answered, and it may be wholly to lay aside the Duty; I say, our Saviour well understanding what the Root is of all these sinful Distempers of our Souls, he seldom or never puts us upon the Duty of Prayer, but he lays before us some Consideration or other for the strengthening of our Faith touching the Efficacy of Prayer, and for the Curing of our Unbelief. Instances hereof you may see, *Matth. 7. 7, 8. Luke 11. 13. John 16. 24. John 14. 13.*

Add hereunto, that he propounded two Parables on Purpose so fram'd, as our Faith in Prayer might, from the Consideration of them, be strengthened; and consequently, that we might unceasingly persevere in the Duty of Prayer, notwithstanding all the Discouragements which we may at any time meet with to interrupt us, and take off our Hearts from the Duty. Both
these

these Parables our Saviour lays before us in the Gospel of St. *Luke*, to perswade us to Perseverance and Importunity in Prayer. The one of these Parables is, that of a Friend coming to his Friend at Midnight, when he was in Bed with his Children, to borrow three Loaves of him, *Luke* 11. 5, 6, 7, 8. The other Parable, is that of the importunate Widow and unrighteous Judge, who neither feared God nor regarded Man, *Luke* 18. from the first Verse to the Eighth.

Now, I beseech you, consult those several Incouragements to Prayer hitherto mentioned, weigh them well, and ponder them in your Heart frequently and seriously; and then I make no Question, but that you will find they have no small Influence upon your Heart for the Strengthening of your Faith in Prayer; and consequently for carrying on your Heart in Prayer against all Impediments and Hindrances that may lie in your Way, as so many Rubs to retard your motions in the Performance of that Part of your Duty.

Object. But it may be you will say, How can we believe against Experience? We find we do not obtain the things we pray for; our Experience therefore

seems to contradict and undermine our Faith.

Answ. 1. Abraham believed against Hope, Rom. 4. 18. and so must you also sometimes believe against present Sense and Feeling. You must not measure the Truth of God's Promises only by those present sensible Experiments of the Truth of them, which you have.

2. Are you sure, that your Prayers are not answered? 'Tis possible, that you may be much mistaken therein. God hath divers other Ways of answering our Prayers, than by giving in the things in kind, which we beg of him. Though he deny us that very thing in kind, which we asked of him, yet he may hear our Prayers by giving us some better things, in Answer to our Prayers, than what we asked of him.

3. It must be further considered, that albeit God hath been pleased to make very many gracious Promises unto Prayer, yet he hath no where absolutely limited any certain Time for answering them. As for Times and Seasons, his Wisdom hath thought fit to reserve and shut up these in his own Breast. *It is not for us to know the Times*

and

and Seasons, which the Father hath put in his own Power, Acts 1. 7.

4. There may have been sundry Defects in your seeking God. You may have sought God indeed, but, perhaps, not earnestly and importunately; or, not constantly, and with that Perseverance in Prayer, which God expects from those who may hope to be gratified; or, not humbly, that is to say, not with a due Sense of your utter Unworthiness of the Mercies which you have been Suiters unto God for; or, not submissively, with a full and free Resignation of your self up to him to be dealt with every Way, as to his infinite Wisdom shall seem best; You have not freely and cheerfully referr'd your self to him, to answer your Prayers for Matter and Manner, for Times and Seasons, and for all other Circumstances of his Answers, as he himself shall judge meetest: Or, lastly, You have not prayed believingly, you have not acted Faith in Prayer, but your Heart hath much staggered and wavered in Prayer, as questioning the Truth of God's Promises, and as doubting sometimes, whether he would ever answer your Prayers or no.

For these and other like Defects in Prayer, which even the best, even the Faithful themselves are subject unto more or less, God may not only respit his Answer to their Prayers, and make them wait long, but finally deny any Answer to their Prayers at all, if he should be extream to mark what is amiss, and deal with them according to their Sins.

Use 2. This also shews where we are to lay the Blame, that we want so many good things; we pray not, or we pray not as we ought. *You have not* (says the Apostle) *because you ask not; You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your Lusts,* James 4. 2, 3. This is most true in Spirituals especially: God is so ready, and so graciously inclin'd to grant us these Mercies above all others, that it must needs be, that we have them not, because we ask them not; or at least, because we ask them not in a due Manner. *If ye being evil, know how to give good things to your Children; how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Luke 11. 13.

And this may suffice to have been spoken, touching our seeking God by
Prayer,

Prayer, and the Assurance we have of finding him, if we seek him in a right Manner.

It now follows, that I should speak of seeking God in a larger Sense, that is to say, in the whole Course of our Lives ; or, in a Way of sincere, constant and universal Obedience. (That we ought thus to seek him, is manifest from divers other Scriptures, which I cannot here insist on.)

Thus *Hezekiah* sought God, as from the Place above recited is manifest; of whom 'tis said (as we have seen) *That he wrought what was Good and Right and Truth before the Lord his God ; and in every Work that he began, in the Service of the House of God, and in the Law, and in the Commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his Heart, and prospered, 2 Chron, 31. 20, 21.* So then, in all those Particulars of his Duty, he is said to have *sought God with all his Heart*, that is, to have studied and endeavoured to please God, and to approve himself unto him.

The like, in Effect, is said of *Josiah*, *That when he was yet young, he began to seek the God of his Father David, 2 Chron,*

Chron. 34. 3. But how did he seek him? Surely, not only by Prayer and Humiliation (though so also no doubt) but in the general Course of his Life, and especially in managing the whole Government of his Kingdom. The Fruits, the Effects, and Demonstrations of his seeking God in that Manner, were seen in the admirable Reformation of Religion, which, through God's singular Goodness to that People, after a sad and woful Defection to Idolatry and Superstition, together with all Manner of Debauchery and Lewdness attending it, was by him wrought in *Judah* and *Jerusalem*.

Now, that all those who thus seek God, shall certainly find him, is likewise manifest from Scripture. I shall only mention three Places to that Purpose. The First shall be that known Place before mentioned, *Ezra* 8. 22. Where that Holy Man and his Associates and Assistants in the great Work of Rebuilding the City and the Temple, which he had undertaken, say to the King, *The Hand of our God is upon all them for good, that seek him ; but his Power, and his Wrath is against all them that forsake him.* And of *Hezekiah*, seeking
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God in the same manner, 'tis said, *That he did whatever he did, with all his Heart, and prospered.* Unto which I add, that famous Place, *Heb. 11. 6.* where we are assured, that *God is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Use. We may be hence informed, that we confine our Religion, and narrow it too much, when we restrain it to Prayer, as if God were to be sought in that Duty only, and not in other Duties. If we will approve our selves to be the faithful Servants of God, we must seek him in the whole Course of our Lives. In every thing we set about, or take in Hand, our great Design must be to please God, and so to demean our selves, as we may obtain of him such Discoveries of his Love and gracious Acceptance, as may, upon all Occasions, cheer and revive our Hearts, and encourage us to consecrate and devote our selves to his Service all our Days. In every thing we do we must have our Eyes upon God, and carefully observe, how he manifests his Favour to us upon all Occasions, and makes Discovery of his Love to us in the Acceptation of our Persons and Services through Christ. This is to seek God in
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the whole Course of our Lives; and happy are all they, who apply themselves thus to seek him, for they shall be sure to find him. Now they, who thus seek God in the whole Course of their Lives are, (1.) Ever looking after him. (2.) They are right glad, when they find him, or when he any way manifesteth his Favour and gracious Respect unto them. (3.) They are really afflicted and troubled, when they cannot find him.

But against this may be objected.

Object. 1. This were impossible; if a Man should thus eye God in every thing, how should he follow his Calling, how should he mind and manage his temporal Affairs and Concernments?

Ans. This would not at all incumber or hinder him in managing the lawful Affairs, Employments and Businesses of this Life. For a general Frame of heavenly-mindedness would enable him to do all this, and make it easie and familiar to him.

Object. 2. This would make a Man's Life uncomfortable, when a Man must be thus hamper'd continually and held in. What a perpetual Bondage were this? Who could bear it?

Ans.

Ans. I may not here enlarge, as being conscious to my self, that I have too much enlarged and expatiated already. In a Word therefore, this would be so far from rendring a Man's Life uncomfortable, that nothing could more effectually conduce to make his Life truly sweet and comfortable than this Course. O then let us all be perswaded thus to steer the Course of our Lives, thus to eye God perpetually, and study in all things to please him, that we may find him here, and eternally enjoy him hereafter.

I now come to speak of the latter Branch of this second Argument, to perswade us to serve God sincerely and cheerfully; *If thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.* In which Words the great Danger of neglecting our Duty is set before us. God will no longer own us, but utterly disclaim us, and cast us off; a greater Misery than which, the Creature is not capable of. For as *in God's Favour is Life, and his loving Kindness is better than Life,* as the Psalmist speaks; so in his Wrath is Death, and that not Temporal only, but Eternal.

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To the End therefore, that we mistake not the Sin against which so dreadful a Punishment is threatned, we are to enquire what forsaking of God is here to be understood. What is here expressed by forsaking God, is the same thing, which we also sometimes, according to the Language of the Scriptures, call *Apostacy, Falling away, Revolting, and Departing from the Lord.*

Now forasmuch as this may sometimes befall those, who do not utterly perish, but afterwards recover, and return again to God, whom they have for a Time forsaken, so that it cannot be said of them, that God doth cast them off for ever; we must therefore distinguish of forsaking God.

There is a Total, and a Partial forsaking God; and again, there is a Temporary, and a Final forsaking him. We must understand this Place of a Total and Final forsaking God: When a Man wholly forsakes him, and so also as never to return to him any more, then will God cast him off for ever, and shew him no more Favour.

But there may be a Partial forsaking God, and that only for a Time, upon which God doth not utterly disclaim
Men,

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Men, and cast them off; for if he did, how then could such be invited to return to God, and Mercy be promised them upon their Return, as we shall afterward see there is? A Man may forsake God for a Time through Weakness and Infirmary, as being overborn by the present Violence and Prevalency of Corruption and Temptation.

God doth not utterly cast Men off, forsaking him in some Passages of their Lives through Weakness, and afterwards recovering themselves and returning to him: But as for such as totally and finally forsake God, who can reasonably think it strange, that God should cast those Men off for ever? This is that which God hath often threatned. *The Destruction of the Transgressors and the Sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed, Isai. 1. 28. All they that are far from Thee shall perish, and thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee, Psal. 73. 27. O Lord, the Hope of Israel, all they that forsake thee shall be ashamed; and they that depart from thee, shall be written in the Earth; because they have forsaken the Lord, the Fountain of living Waters, Jer. 17. 13. Their Names shall be*

be written in the Earth, that is, they shall utterly perish, and their very Memories, in a short time, shall be blotted out and abolished; as things written in the Dust are subject to be done out with every Blast of Wind. *If any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him*, Heb. 10. 38.. And then it follows in the next Verse, *We are not of them that draw back to Perdition*: So that the Issue of a Man's drawing back or forsaking God is Perdition. All which Passages of Scripture, and others of like Importance shew, that all they who forsake God are in the ready Way to Ruin, by being forsaken of him; yea, are sure to be cast off for ever, and to perish. But then, as before, we must understand it of a Total and Final forsaking him

Use 1. If it be a Matter of such sad and dreadful Consequence to forsake God; if it be the Way to be forsaken and utterly cast off by him; then it highly concerns us to beware how we come near this fearful Sin: And we make some Approaches towards it by our Lukewarmness, Coldness, and Indifference in the Service of God. Our Back-sliding from God in any Measure is a
Step

Step towards our forsaking him. Wherefore they who would not forsake God must be careful, that they do not recoil or backslide from him in the least: They must therefore carefully observe when they begin at any time to decline; when any Symptoms or Signs of a back-sliding Distemper coming on and growing upon them, appear: And having taken Notice thereof, they must seasonably oppose it, and endeavour to prevent further Relapses and Decays.

Now the Signs of a declining Estate, or at least of some Disposition to back-sliding, are these and such like:

1. Small Delight in the Word and Ordinances of God. You can, it may be, say, that the Time hath been, when the Word was *sweeter to you than the Honey and the Honey-Comb*; when Opportunities of attending upon Ordinances were most welcome to you, and no Time was spent with greater Satisfaction and Content to your Soul, than those Hours in which you waited on God in the Assemblies of his People: But now, you know not how it comes to pass, you relish not that Sweetness in the Word, and you have much a-do to

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keep up any Affection towards it; yet 'tis sometimes even a Burden to you to wait upon God; and if Opportunities were more seldom, and Duties shorter as the present Temper of your Soul is, you should not much complain. This is an ill Sign, of an untoward Frame of Heart, which too manifestly discovers some Decay.

2. Slightness and Formality in secret Duties, especially Prayer; a Backwardness to that Duty, so as you can very hardly bring your Heart to set about it; a Willingness to be dispenced with for neglecting it; a Proneness to put it off from one time to another, and many times wholly to omit it upon any slight Occasion; whereas heretofore you were ready to make Use of all fit Seasons and Places for that Duty, and where you were streightned or necessarily detain'd, and by unavoidable Occasions hindred, it was a real Trouble to you, and your Soul was longing after those Retirements you were wont to have, and could not be satisfied without them: But now your Soul is very much a Stranger to these things for the most part. This is another Sign that all things are not right with you.

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3. A Declining the Company and Society of good Christians; or, a far less Complacency and Delight in their Converse than heretofore: Your Heart hath been so knit to them, as you were never well longer than you were in their company; but now it is much one to you where you are, or with whom you converse; You can enjoy your self as well, and entertain your self with as much Content in the constant Society of those, who have not so much as the Grace of Religion, as of any other Persons whatsoever.

4. Some Degree of a kind of Hardness of Heart and less Tenderness of Conscience than sometime you have had: You are now sometimes bold and hardy to venture on some Sins, which formerly you were afraid to come near: You are now less scared with some real evils, than with the Appearances of evil heretofore. And when you have made bold with Sin, you have little trouble, you make no great haste to make your Peace with God again, whereas sometimes formerly you could have had no Rest in your Soul till you had humbl'd your self for Sin, and renewed your Resolutions of greater
K k 2 Watch.

Watchfulness against it for the Future

These are some of those Symptoms by which a Man may evidently discover his Declinings and Backslidings from God in some Degree. Now, I say, he that would be kept from an utter forsaking God, must diligently observe these such like Decays of his Soul, and use his utmost Diligence to set things right again before he hath too far declined. And where no such Signs of a declining and sickly Temper of the Soul can be observed; where all things are so well, and there is no Indication or Appearance of an unhealthy Constitution, yet even there it is of great Concernment to endeavour to keep the Soul in that healthy sound and thriving Condition, and to prevent all such spiritual Decays and Backslidings from God, as might make way for an utter forsaking him, or Apostacy from him.

In the further Prosecution of this Undertaking I shall say something of the Causes of Backsliding and Apostacy; then I shall add somewhat of the Danger thereof; and lastly, mention some of the Means whereby we may be secured against it and preserved from it.

As to the Causes of Backsliding and Apostacy, they are many, some of which are these that follow:

1. Secret Hypocrisie and Unsoundness at the Heart under a visible Profession, and a very specious, it may be, a glorious outward Shew of Religion; when amidst all the Pretensions to Religion, which a Man made in his Profession, there wanted the main thing Sincerity at the Bottom. For where Sincerity is not, there all other things are designed and forced; and therefore corrupt Nature doth but as it were watch for an Opportunity to be at Liberty again, and to cast off that Guise and Viizard of Religion, which for some Byends it hath put on. Hence it is that such Men usually at length throw off all Religion, and give themselves up to the prophane Conduct and wicked Inclinations of their unsound and corrupt Hearts.

(1.) Sometimes they are weary of that outward Restraint, which the Profession of Religion puts upon them; 'tis a Burden which they cannot long endure, a grievous Yoke, which sooner or later they are impatient of bearing any further.

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(2.) Those

(2.) Those By-ends, which after them cease, or they fall short of attaining them; and then finding the Profession of Religion to be of no further Advantage to them that Way, they have done with

(3.) Sometimes they meet with Opposition or Persecution for their Profession of Religion, and then they are weary of it. But Sincerity gives Stability and Constancy in the Profession of Religion. The Sound and sincere Heart, a renewed and changed Heart, it is endued with a new Nature, being made *Partaker of the Divine Nature*, as the Apostle speaks, unto which the Yoke of Christ is sweet and easie; and the Ways of Wisdom are *Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths Peace*. Now though violent and forced things are not perpetual, yet what is natural, what is from an internal Principle, that is constant and permanent.

Thus we find in the Gospel; that they who received *Seed into good Ground* that is, into good, honest, sincere and upright Hearts, they *kept it, it took Root* in them, and they *brought forth Fruit* and persevered; whereas others fell away in a short time, and lost all that which they seem'd to have gain'd by hearing, *Matt*

13. And the Reason which the Apostle gives, why many in the latter Times should fall away from the Truth, being given up to strong Delusions to believe Lies, is, *because they received not the Love of the Truth*, 2 Thess. 2. 10. The Truth they did in a Manner entertain, but they did not receive it into good and honest Hearts, they did not embrace it with an unfeigned, sincere and hearty Love and Affection, and therefore that which was sown in them soon wither'd away and came to nothing.

2. Another Cause of Backsliding and Apostacy, is an inordinate Love of the World, and an over-eager Pursuit of the things thereof. For,

(1.) This smothers and stifles whatever good Beginnings there are, and presently cools a Man's Affections, and damps his Endeavours after heavenly things. This our Saviour excellently sets forth, comparing the Word received by one whose Heart is set upon the World, unto *Seed that is sown among Thorns, which choak it*, Matth. 13. 7. *And the Care of this World and the Deceitfulness of Riches* (saith he. Ver. 22.) *choak the Word, and he becometh unfruitful*;

these like Thorns in a Field, so overgrow the Heart, as nothing that is good can thrive in it.

(2.) If a Man's Heart be glued to the World, and cannot be drawn off from it, when the Case shall be put to him, which of the two he will forsake Christ or the World, tho' he may a little deliberate and pause upon it, yet his final Resolution will be to shake Hand with Christ, and cleave to the World. And this difficult Case is frequently put to those who make Profession of Religion, especially in times of Persecution and then too many quickly discover what they are, and how little true Love they had for Christ.

This was that which made Discovery of *Demas* his Unsoundness, and made him fall away. For a time, it seems, he had some Hopes that the Profession of the Christian Religion, and Enjoyment of this World, might have consisted and stood together well enough; and so long he was contented to be a Christian but when it came to this critical and discriminating Point, that he must either quit the one or the other, bid farewell to Christ or the World, he hath done with Religion, he hath had enough of it already.

ready. This is the Account which the Apostle, in a few Words, gives of his falling away, 2 Tim. 4. 10. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present World.*

3. Withdrawing from the publick Ordinances, and forsaking the Assemblies of God's People, is another Cause of Backsliding, and by Degrees of Apostacy from God. The Reason whereof is manifest; for seeing God hath set up and established Ordinances in the Church, *for the Perfecting of the Saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12. they who contemn those Means and Helps which God hath afforded for their Edification, must needs decay and languish, and by little and little apostatize and fall away.

Our own sad Experience is too pregnant a Proof hereof: How many, who first began with slighting publick Ordinances, within a while proceeded to withdraw from them, and anon, took up one pernicious Error or another; and at last, having tried and run through many several Ways, have ended in open Prophaneness, or stuck fast in the Mire of some desperate Heresie, as bad as open

pen Prophaneness, if not worse! And we cannot but acknowledge it to be a most righteous thing with God, that they who will venture to leave God's Way, should lose themselves and perish in their own crooked Ways, which they have chosen and preferred before those safe and comfortable Ways which he hath chalked out for them. It is a most dangerous thing to make our selves wiser than God, which we do when we take up Ways and Methods of our own in Opposition to his. This is such an Affront both to his Wisdom and Authority, as God seldom or never lets pass, without some remarkable Brand of his high Displeasure.

4. Neglect of self-Examination and frequent Reflection on our selves is another Cause of Backsliding and Apostacy. Those Merchants, who seldom examine and cast up their Books to see whether they go forward or backward in their Estates, are in most Danger of Decays. 'Tis so in a Man's spiritual Estate. He who never looks into himself and examines in what Condition his Soul is, whether in a thriving and prosperous Condition, or declining and upon the losing hand,

hand, may easily relapse and fall back dangerously before he is aware of it. Nay, 'tis impossible but that he should have already fallen back. For this careless, drowzy, and secure Temper, is not only a Cause of declining daily more and more, but an Argument and an Effect of his backsliding. Where the Soul is in good Plight it will be watchful, solicitous and diligent about its spiritual Concernment. 'Tis not possible to come to such a careless and regardless Frame, as seldom to look seriously into the State of a Man's Soul, but upon some considerable Decay and Backsliding from God first, which gradually brought the Soul into this slothful, secure and sleepy Temper.

But a constant Course of Reflexion on your self, and examining your Estate, will help you to discern the first Grudgings of spiritual Distempers; the first Steps that the Soul takes backwards, and the Beginnings of Decays and Languishings: And this will put you upon the Means of Recovery seasonably, before you have gone far away from God. And a double Advantage you have herein; For,

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(1.) You recover with more Ease; because you take the Disease before it come to its height, and so there is much less Trouble in the Cure.

(2.) You prevent all those dangerous Consequents, and great Michiefs which your further declining would speedily bring upon you.

5. Ill Company is another Cause of Backsliding. There is a Poison, a pestilential Infection in the Converse of wicked Men; they blast the Air in which they breath, and you cannot easily come near them, but you are in Danger of taking Hurt by them. Though there may be sometimes a Necessity of some Converse with them, yet unnecessary Familiarity with them is extreemly dangerous; and so much the more dangerous, because the Infection, which is derived from them, conveys and insinuates it self into the Soul insensibly, and works in such a Manner, as its Progress cannot easily be discerned.

(1.) From your familiar Converse with them, you will contract a kind of Indifferency and Lukewarmness in Reference to Matters of Religion. If you had any Degree of Zeal and Warmth before, it will hereby be cool'd.

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(2.) Hereupon will ensue a Carelessness and Remissness in the Matters of your Duty, and some grosser Neglects of what you ought to have done, and were wont to make Conscience of.

(3.) Then after a while, you will have some Disgust at Religion; some Dislike of and Averſation from those good things, which sometimes you not only approved of, but took some Delight in.

(4.) If still the same Familiarity be continued, you are in a Readiness to disclaim all that which before you owned and made Profession of, and fall away from it. And if you should proceed so far as to fall off, 'twill be well if you can stay there: You are in Danger of going a Step further; deriding and scoffing at, opposing and persecuting those Ways of God which you formerly approved of and walked in. But this falls in with the next thing propounded to be spoken to, which is the Danger of Backsliding and Apostacy.

Now the Danger of Backsliding appears in that it is most difficult to return, and recover what is lost. This is manifest from Experience: If Men de-

decline much, it's seldom seen that they are reclaimed; and that, whether they have declined to Prophaneness or to some dangerous Opinion.

As for those who give themselves up to a lewd and prophane Course of Life, 'tis easie to observe, that for the most part, they grow more lewd and profligately vicious than they were before they first looked toward God, and began to make Profession of Religion; and as the Apostle saith, *The latter End with them is worse than the Beginning*, 2 Pet. 2. 20, 21. So that 'tis much more easie to reclaim a lewd Person that never look'd towards Religion, than such. If we look up and down among sound Christians, we shall find many of them that have at first been converted from a prophane Course of Life, but very few of them such as have been recovered out of their Prophaneness a second time, after they have relapsed into it.

And as for such as have so fallen off as to take up and embrace some heretical Opinions, associating themselves with Persons and Societies of Men addicted to those Wayes; we may often observe, that they are indeed turn'd from one wild and pernicious Error to another, from one false Way of Worship to another;
but

but very rarely that they return out of the Way of Error into the Way of Truth. So that what *Solomon* saith of Men inveigled and drawn away by the wicked Arts and Inticements of the Harlot, *Prov. 2. 19. None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the Paths of Life*; that is, it is a very rare thing for such Men to recover themselves; the same may we say of Men inticed and drawn aside into the By-Ways of erroneous and heretical Opinions. And which is just Matter of Admiration, there's no false Opinion or dangerous Error so absurd, or irrational, so incapable of being defended by any Shadow of sound Reason, but Men that have once entertained it, will hold it and stick to it against all the clearest and most irrefragable Arguments that can be brought from Scripture or right Reason. And the Reasons hereof are,

(1.) Because they do, upon the Matter, disclaim and renounce right reason, stopping their Ears against it; so as it is, for the most part, but Labour lost to discourse with them.

(2.) Many of them, as we may justly fear, are judicially given up to strong Delusions to believe Lies, as a Punishment

ment of their former Sins some other Way; and in particular, for not *receiving the Truth with the Love of it*, and walking according to it.

(3.) To turn aside unto Error and Prophaneness, is to go down the Hill, and to comply with and follow the corrupt Inclinations of a Man's own Heart, and that is easie: but to return is to go up the Hill, and that is a laborious and difficult thing. To go away from God, is to swim with the Stream of a Man's sinful Inclinations; to return to God, is to swim against it.

(4.) Our Backslidings and Departings from God do weaken us. We thereby lose much of our spiritual Strength and Vigour, and so every Step we take backwards, makes us more unable to return. Wherefore if we could not stand and keep our Ground, when we were stronger, we are much less able to recover what we have lost, when we are weaker.

(5.) By Backsliding, God is provoked to leave a Man; and what can a poor, weak, sinful Creature do in his own Strength, when God has withdrawn from him, and left him to himself? Can he now do any thing toward

ward his Return to God, from whom he has departed? Run farther away from God he may and will, unless God be pleased to pity him, and lend him his merciful Hand to reduce him. But he is so far from being able to return of himself, as that he cannot entertain as much as one serious Thought of returning, much less can he apply himself to stir up, to exert and put forth the Reminders of that little Strength which still he hath, in order to his Return. All these things considered, it is a Wonder that any Man, who hath apostatized or fallen off from God, should ever recover again; 'tis through the mighty Power of God alone, and through the efficacious Influences and powerful Assistances of his most free and sovereign Grace, that any Man doth return.

Hitherto of the Danger of Backsliding and Forsaking God: Now follow the Means by which we may be preserved from it; which are,

1. An holy Fear and Jealousie of ourselves, and a Distrust of our own Strength to persevere.

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When we are most confident of our own Strength, then are we in greatest Danger: For then we are careless, and neglect to watch, pray, and make Use of other Means, whereby we might be secured against Backsliding, and preserved from it; then we look not up to God and depend on him for Strength. This we ordinarily find by our daily Experience. So it was with St. Peter Who among all the Apostles so confident as he? *Matth. 26. 33, 35.* And yet, who among them all fell more shamefully?

But when we are sensible of our Weakness, and distrustful of our selves, This makes us watch, and pray; This makes us careful, with all holy Diligence, to apply our selves to the Use of all good Means whereby we may be kept from Backsliding; This makes us live by Faith, resting and relying on God alone, for spiritual Strength and Ability to adhere unto him; and so indeed, as the Apostle saith, (*2 Cor. 12. 10.*) *When we are weak, then are we strong;* when we are weak in our own Sense and Feeling, then are we strong through the Almighty Power of God supporting and upholding us.

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Hence are we, in Holy Scripture, so often cautioned against Self-Confidence, and exhorted to maintain and keep up an holy Fear and Solicitousness about our spiritual Estate. *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10. 12. Be not high minded, but fear, Rom. 11. 20. Let us fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into his Rest; any of you should seem to come short of it, Heb. 4. 1. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief in departing from the living God, Heb. 3. 12. Work out your Salvation with Fear and Trembling, Phil. 2. 12.*

2. A constant and conscientious Attendance on the Ordinances of God. For as the Ministry of the Word is the ordinary Means of Conversion, *Faith cometh by Hearing, Rom. 10. 17.* So the Ministry of the Word, and the Ordinances of God, are the Means of our further strengthening, and building up in Knowledge, Faith, and Holiness. St. Paul therefore taking Leave of the Elders of Ephesus, saith to them, *I commend you to God, and the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among them that are*

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sanctified, Acts 20. 32. So he teaches us, that the End of all spiritual Gifts bestowed on Men, of all Ordinances and Offices in the Church, is *the perfecting of the Saints, and edifying of the Body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12. From hence we may infer the Necessity of our Attendance on these Ordinances, if we would be built up and grow in Grace, and not decline and fall away. A Man may as well expect to grow and thrive in bodily Statute and Strength, without Nourishment, as to grow in Grace without the Use of the Means by God appointed for our Growth. Wherefore as no Man can duly wait on the Ordinances, but he shall receive Benefit to his Soul thereby, one way or other; so can no Man neglect and Contemn Ordinances, but he shall thereby be greatly prejudiced, as to his spiritual Estate, and be in extream Danger of falling off and losing all that which he seemed to have acquired, if he do not timely prevent it, by returning into God's Way. Whatever Mens Pleas and Pretences may be for absenting themselves, 'tis undoubtedly a sore Judgment of God upon them to be thus given up to their own affected Ways, idle Fancies, and

vain Reasonings; and to be so wise in their own Eyes, as to oppose their own foolish Devices to his wise Counsels and holy Ways. Can any Man that rightly considers the Matter, think that God will suffer himself to be so affronted, and not inflict some Brand and Mark of his Displeasure upon the Souls of such Men?

3. Frequent communing with our own Hearts, and seasonable Humiliation for Sin presently after the Commission thereof; with serious Endeavours to return to God by renewing our Repentance and making our Peace with him. As long as we have the Remainders of sinful Corruption about us, which will be as long as we live here, so long shall we ever and anon fall; but if we labour presently to rise again, and close up the Breach which was made betwixt God and us, we shall hereby not only keep our Ground, but gain some considerable Advantage towards our further Progress in the Way to Heaven; for we shall by this Course so strengthen and confirm our Purposes against Sin for the future, as we shall go on more resolutely, and stand out against all Assaults of Temptations more stoutly and

sanctified, Acts 20. 32. So he teacheth us, that the End of all spiritual Gifts bestowed on Men, of all Ordinances and Offices in the Church, is *the perfecting of the Saints, and edifying of the Body of Christ*, Eph. 4. 12. From hence we may infer the Necessity of our Attendance on these Ordinances, if we would be built up and grow in Grace, and not decline and fall away. A Man may as well expect to grow and thrive in bodily Stature and Strength, without Nourishment, as to grow in Grace without the Use of the Means by God appointed for our Growth. Wherefore as no Man can duly wait on the Ordinances, but he shall receive Benefit to his Soul thereby, one way or other; so can no Man neglect and Contemn Ordinances but he shall thereby be greatly prejudiced, as to his spiritual Estate, and be in extream Danger of falling off and losing all that which he seemed to have acquired, if he do not timely prevent it, by returning into God's Way. Whatever Mens Pleas and Pretence may be for absenting themselves, 'tis undoubtedly a sore Judgment of God upon them to be thus given up to their own affected Ways, idle Fancies, and

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vain Reasonings; and to be so wise in their own Eyes, as to oppose their own foolish Devices to his wise Counsels and holy Ways. Can any Man that rightly considers the Matter, think that God will suffer himself to be so affronted, and not inflict some Brand and Mark of his Displeasure upon the Souls of such Men?

3. Frequent communing with our own Hearts, and seasonable Humiliation for Sin presently after the Commission thereof; with serious Endeavours to return to God by renewing our Repentance and making our Peace with him.

As long as we have the Remainders of sinful Corruption about us, which will be as long as we live here, so long shall we ever and anon fall; but if we labour presently to rise again, and close up the Breach which was made betwixt God and us, we shall hereby not only keep our Ground, but gain some considerable Advantage towards our further Progress in the Way to Heaven; for we shall by this Course so strengthen and confirm our Purposes against Sin for the future, as we shall go on more resolutely, and stand out against all Assaults of Temptations more stoutly and

couragiously. But if after we have fallen, we neglect to endeavour to rise again, if we sleep on in Sin, having lost some Ground already by our Fall, we are in Danger of falling back still further and further, as any Temptation thereunto shall at any Time encounter us. There is therefore nothing more necessary, nor of greater Avail towards our Perseverance, and Preservation from declining, than the diligent and constant Observation of all our particular Slips and Falls, and our speedy addressing our selves to recover what we have lost, by sound Humiliation and Repentance.

SERMON

SERMON XIV.

1 Chron. xxviii. Ver. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searcheth all Hearts, and understandeth all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, He will cast thee off for ever.

Use 2. **I**F the Danger of Backsliding and Apostacy be so great, and if the Consequents of it be so fearful; then it highly concerns all those

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who have fallen back to endeavour to return and recover themselves, and to do it speedily and effectually. If they should be taken hence before they have recovered themselves, the Approaches of Death would be terrible to them. He who walks most constantly and closely with God, and is most careful to be still growing in Grace, and daily improving what he hath attained; he who is still from day to day giving all Diligence to make his Calling and Election sure, shall yet find when he comes to die, that all this is little enough to prepare him to go out of the World comfortably. With how much Amazement and Terror then will he be stricken at the Apprehensions of Death, now ready to seize on him, whose guilty Conscience shall tell him, that he hath forsaken God, and apostatized from him; that God who hath threatned to forsake those, who forsake him, and to cast them off for ever! Or, if the Case should not be altogether so bad with him, if when Death comes, he be found but in a backsliding and declining Condition, yet it will be very sad with him to be now summoned to appear before God, when he is much less prepared to appear

pear before him, than he was some Years past.

Let me put the Question to you, who cannot but acknowledge that you are nearly concern'd in what has been spoken; whose own Hearts condemn you as such, who have shamefully fallen back and declined; though you have not wholly forsaken God, are you willing that Death should come upon you, as now 'tis with you? Can you cheerfully and comfortably go out of the World in this backsliding Estate? If you cannot, why do you not apply yourselves with all holy Seriousness and Diligence to recover what you have lost? Can you be quiet in that Condition in which you dare not be found when Death comes?

When the Church of *Ephesus* had left her first Love, and in great Measure declined, how did Christ rouse her up and awaken her! *Remember, said he, from whence thou art fallen and repent, and do thy first Works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy Candlestick out of his Place, Rev. 2. 4, 5.* The Case of the Church of *Ephesus* is your very Case; You also have left your first Love; and therefore unless you repent and do
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your first Works, What else can you expect, but that Christ will come unto you quickly? And can you tell how he will come? It may be he will come unto you by some grievous outward Affliction; it may be, by inward Terrors; or, it may be, he will come by Death: And he saith *he will come quickly*; Do you know how quickly? May he not surprize you this very Day; this very Hour? What Security have you to the contrary? Hath he set the very Time of his Coming, so as you need not fear his Approach in the mean while? Hath he not expressly declared, that *he will come upon such as you are, as a Thief, and you shall not know what Hour he will come upon you?* Rev. 3. 3. Stir up your selves therefore and do your best to be in a Readiness to entertain him, or rather to prevent his Coming in Way of Judgment if you can.

When God had used many sharp and severe Means to reclaim backsliding *Israel*, and yet still the Issue was, they returned not unto him; at length he threatned yet sorer things than any of those, which had formerly come upon them. *Thus* (said he) *will I do unto thee*; he doth not in particular express how

how he would deal with them, but under those dark and general Terms he would have them understand something of a more formidable Nature than what they had hitherto felt. And the Use they were to make of this Threatning was, to be thereby awaken'd and quickned to prepare themselves and to be in a ready Posture to meet God, who was now in his Way toward them. *Thus will I do unto thee; and because I will do thus, Prepare to meet thy God, oh Israel,* Amos 4. 12. God hath threaten'd, that he will come upon Backsliders and Apostates; and unless they repent, he will come speedily, and when they are least aware of it, he will come *as a Thief*. If they be wise and love their own Safety, they will prepare to meet him: They will, by sound Humiliation and true Repentance, return to him from whom they have fallen, and make their Peace with him before those Judgments which he hath threatned, light upon them.

Object. 1. But you may object, I have gone so far away from God, and so long neglected to return, that I am afraid he hath no Mercy for me. What Encouragement

ment have I to return to God, who have carried my self so ingratefully and so unworthily towards him as I have done ! If I had been a meer Stranger to the Ways of God, and had never tasted how gracious the Lord is to those who walk in Obedience to him, I could have hoped he would have received me ; but having *forsaken God the Fountain of living Waters* after I had experimentally found what Content and Satisfaction there is in his Service ; having departed from him, and *done as bad things as I could* against him, who was never a *barren Wilderness or a Land of Darkness* to me, who never deserv'd to be so renounced and cast off by me ; having wretchedly run away from him who was no Tyrant to me, but a kind and gracious Master ; this is that which makes me question whether God will ever be reconciled to me, or look graciously on me any more.

To this I answer ; That though these be great Aggravations of your Sins, and such as for which God may justly *shut up his loving Kindness in Displeasure, and be favourable to you no more* ; yet your Case is not desperate, if you can now, after

ter all this, return unto him unfeignedly and with your whole Heart. If you have an Heart to return, you want not Encouragement thereunto, as good Encouragement as you can desire.

1. God invites and earnestly calls upon Backsliders to return unto him, and promiseth Mercy to them upon their Return. *Israel* had wretchedly forsaken God; *he had spoken and done evil things as he could*, as God complains of him, *Jer. 3. 5.* and yet how graciously doth he encourage him to Repentance? *Ver. 12. Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine Anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep Anger for ever.* And again, *Ver. 14. Turn, O backsliding Children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you.* As if God had said, as bad as you have been, I have not yet disclaimed you, I still am ready to own my Relation to you as your Husband, if you can be perswaded to return to your Duty and Loyalty as my Spouse. Be you once again but dutiful and faithful to me, and then never doubt of my owning you.

And as full every Way, if not fuller, is the Encouragement he gives them to
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return to him, *Hos. 14.* O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine Iniquity, Ver. 1. And then, that they may know he is in earnest, and will be very well pleased with their Return, and they need not doubt of being welcome to him, he is graciously pleased to indite and frame a Prayer for them, and to put Words into their Mouths. *Take to you Words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the Calves of our Lips. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon Horses; neither will we say any more to the Work of our Hands, ye are our Gods,* Ver. 2, 3. And then, if thus they should earnestly beg Mercy, and sincerely engage never to return to Sin again, never to provoke God again by their carnal Confidences, and their Idolatries, as they had formerly done, God assures them they shall find Grace in his Eyes: *I will heal their Backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine Anger is turned away from him,* Ver. 4.

2. The large Extent of the Promises of Forgiveness which God hath made to all penitent Sinners, are another Encouragement to Backsliders and Apostates

to return to God. *He that confesseth his Sin and forsaketh it shall have Mercy,* Prov. 28. 13. *Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, cease to do Evil, learn to do well; Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your Sins be as Scarlet they shall be white as Snow, though they be red like Crimson they shall be as Wool,* Isai. 1. 16, 17, 18. *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and let him turn to the Lord and he will have Mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon,* Isai. 55. 7. *If the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: In his Righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any Pleasure at all that the Wicked should die, saith the Lord God; and not that he should turn from his Ways and live?* Ezek. 18. 21, 22, 23. These and other such like Promises running in general Terms may assure Backsliders and Apostates, as well as other Sinners, that if they shall truly and unfeignedly

feignedly be humbled for their Sins, repent and return to God, they shall find Mercy with him : So that neither the Greatness of their Sins, nor any aggravating Circumstances of them, shall ever be able to deprive them of Mercy, if they be not wanting to themselves in not performing the Conditions upon which Pardon is offered, which are their forsaking their evil Ways, and returning to God.

3. The Examples of God's singular Mercy towards Backsliders upon their Repentance, are another Encouragement to Backsliders to return to God.

Great was *Solomon's* Sin, and God was much provoked by it, that *when he was old*, he complied so far with *his strange Wives*, as that *his Heart was turned away after other Gods from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared unto him twice*, 1 King. 11. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. and yet it is conceived, that upon his Repentance manifested in his *Ecclesiastes*, he obtained Mercy and was saved.

Another Example we have in *Manasseh*, whose Backsliding was most notorious and horrid, considering his pious Education under his religious Father *Hezekiah*, for 'tis said of him, *That he*
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did Evil in the sight of the Lord, like unto the Abominations of the Heathen, whom the Lord had cast out before the Children of Israel; that he built again the High-Places which Hezekiah his Father had broken down, and reared up Altars for Baalim, and made Groves, and worshipped all the Host of Heaven and served them; that he built Altars for all the Host of Heaven in the two Courts of the House of the Lord; that he caused his Children to pass through the Fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; that he observed Times, and used Inchantments and Witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar Spirit, and with Wizards; that he set up a carved Image (the Idol which he had made) in the House of God; that he made Judah and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the Heathen whom the Lord had destroyed before the Children of Israel; that he shed innocent Blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem with it from one End to another; these his horrid and monstrous Provocations are at large recorded, 2 King. 21. and 2 Chron. 33. Now a Man would have been apt to think, that whoever had obtained Pardon, Manasseh's Sin should never have been forgiven

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him. But behold the unspeakable Goodness of God, and the tender Bowels of his Compassions towards the Returning and truly penitent Backslider: Even this *Manasseh in his Affliction*, and not till then neither, *besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, and prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his Supplication*, 2 Chron. 33. 12, 13. And that he obtain'd the Pardon of his great Sins, as well as the Favour to be brought again to *Jerusalem* into his Kingdom, from whence he had been carried away for his Sins, we have this good Argument to perswade us to believe, that after his Return to his Kingdom, and Re-establishment in it, he gave such good Evidence and Proof of the Truth and Soundness of his Repentance; for it is said of him, *That he took away the strange Gods, and the Idol out of the House of the Lord, and all the Altars that he had built in the Mount of the House of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the City; and that he commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel*, 2 Chron. 33. 15, 16. After *Manasseh* his Pardon obtained, and Mercy shewed him who was so prodigious a Sinner, what truly humbled

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and penitent Sinner hath any Reason to despair of Forgiveness? Is Sin a Burthen to you? Are you weary of it? Are you unfeignedly willing to forsake it? And are you willing to return to God from whom you have revolted? Are you resolved for the Remainder of your Days *to cleave to him with full Purpose of Heart*? Do you desire nothing more than to be for the Future so confirmed, strengthened, and established by his Grace, as you may never any more return to Folly? If it be so with you, then need not either the Number, or Greatness, or long Continuance, or any other Aggravations of your Backslidings discourage you from returning. Upon your hearty and unfeigned Return to God you are assured of Mercy; but no Mercy is to be hoped for or expected, yea, *Judgment without Mercy*, the terrible Effects of God's Indignation will be your Portion, if you still proceed in your evil Ways, and decline more and more; *The Power and Wrath of God is against all that forsake him*, as you heard before, *Ezra 8. 22. God will wound the Head of his Enemies, and the hairy Scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his Trespasses*, *Psal. 68. 21. When the Righteous*

turneth away from his Righteousness, and committeth Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the wicked Man doth, shall he live? All his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his Trespasse that he hath trespassed, and in his Sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die, Ezek. 18. 24. that is still, in Case he shall not return, but persevere in his Backsliding.

Obj. 2. You may here say, I perceive indeed, that it highly concerns me to return to God, and you have given some Encouragements to return; but however those Encouragements may reach some other Backsliders, I am afraid they will not reach me. Had I a tender Sense of my vile and wretched Revolting from God, and were my Heart soft and relenting, and could I affectionately lament and bewail my shameful Backslidings, then I think I could hope that what God hath spoken to encourage Backsliders to return, might reach my Condition; but this is my Misery, my wretched Heart is so hardened, that I have no Sense of my Sin in forsaking God; and when I endeavour to make my Heart sensible thereof, I find I labour

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bour in vain, for my stony Heart will not yield or relent; nothing will work upon it to soften it. And I have much Cause to fear that God will for my Backslidings give me up to a further Degree of Hardness, so as I shall every Day be more hardened, and more indisposed and unable to return to God with that Sense of my Sins, with that relenting and Brokenness of Heart which he expects, and requires of those unto whom he intends Mercy.

Answ. Hardness of Heart is indeed the natural Effect of a Course of Sin; and besides, God doth many times give Backsliders up to a judicial Hardness, after their wilful Revoltings from him, which makes their Case more sad and dangerous; and the Issue hereof is, that they go away so far from God, that they are at a greater Distance from him than ever they were before they had any Acquaintance with the Ways of God. This is that which our Saviour intends, *Matth. 12. 43, 44, 45.* where he saith, that if the Devil, *The unclean Spirit*, come out of a Man, and afterwards be again entertained and recover his Possession of the same Man, then he

bringeth along with him seven other Spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last State of that Man is worse than the First; so sad are the Consequents of notorious Backsliding. But if it should have been so with you, yet would not your Case be desperate, if after all this you can seriously apply and set your self to return to God. And whereas you complain of the Hardness and Insensibleness of your Heart, you must in this Case,

1. Betake your self to God by Prayer, earnestly imploring his softening Grace. 'Tis his peculiar Work *to take away the stony Heart and give an Heart of Flesh*, which he undertakes and promiseth to do for those that seek unto him for this Mercy, *Ezek. 36. 26, 37.* And there is no Heart so hard but he is able to soften it.

2. You must attend upon softening Means; you must constantly wait upon God in his Ordinances. The Word of God is *as a Fire and an Hammer*, as God himself testifieth concerning it by his Prophet, *Jer. 23. 29.* A Fire to heat and soften the Heart, to make it yielding and malleable; and an Hammer to beat it into what Form God pleaseth, to
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work it, to frame and fashion it, as he sees good.

And though your Attendance on the Word may for a while seem to be of small Advantage towards the softening your Heart, though you can hardly observe any sensible Benefit, which you have received thereby, yea though your Heart should seem to be harder, after you have for some time attended on the Word than before, yet must not that discourage you. For,

(1.) God by the Word softens your Heart gradually, and by little and little. So as though somewhat be done upon your Heart, yet for a while you can no more take Notice what Degree of Softness you have gained, than you can in the Morning observe how the Grass hath grown the Night past. So hard is your Heart, that it must be often in the Fire and under the Hammer, before any Alteration will appear.

(2.) Sometime the principal Effect of the Word upon the Heart is, that it leaves it more sensible of its Hardness than it was before. A Man never thought his Heart to be so hard, as now he feels it to be, since he hath been wont to attend on the Word more con-

scientifically than formerly. And this is a good and very considerable Effect of the Word. That Hearer may, upon good Grounds, make Account that he hath profited by the Word, who hath brought thence a great Sense of the Hardness of his Heart, though he be able to observe no other Influence that the Word hath had upon him. Never think you have wholly lost your Labour in hearing the Word, when you come away from it sighing, complaining, and mourning that your Heart is so hard.

(3.) The Sense and Feeling that you have of the Hardness of your Heart argues a Degree of Softness, especially when you also bewail that Hardness, and truly desire the Removal of it; when you highly value that Softness of Heart, which you are labouring after, and would purchase it at any Rate. A Stone feels not its Hardness; so neither doth that Heart, which is wholly a stony Heart, and on which no Impressions of softening Grace have ever been.

(4.) A Sense of the Hardness of your Heart is not only an Argument of some Degree of Softness already attained; but moreover, a Pledge of a greater Measure

Measure of softening Grace, which God intends to bestow. For this is his usual Method; where he purposeth to give in an Encrease of any Grace, there he first makes the Heart feel the Want of it; and this as it quickens and stirs up to earnest Prayer for that Grace, so it prepares the Heart to receive it; for it makes it so much the more sensible of the worth of it, and of God's Power and Goodness in bestowing the Grace that is desired, and consequently disposeth the Soul to be more truly thankful for it.

Object. 3. But I have often resolved and promised to return to God, and I have often begun to do it; for a little Space, I have been doing something to recover my self; and yet I have quickly relapsed, and all hath been as nothing: Having had Experience so many times of my Weakness and Inconstancy, I am now hopeless, and think it is in vain to endeavour to return; for I fear I shall never attain to any Constancy, or Stability in good Ways; I shall still be falling back again whatever Attempts I may make to recover the Ground which I have lost.

Ans.

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Answ. It cannot be denied but that this is a sore Discouragement, and that in several Respects.

1. It makes us asham'd to come to God again with Promises in our Mouths that all shall be amended, and that we will never do as we have done, when we have so often already broken our Promises and falsified our Word; and when by our deceitful Carriage we have declared and manifested that we are not to be believed, nor is there any Credit to be given to any thing we can say.

2. It makes us fear, that by our delusive and treacherous Demeanour we have so far provoked God, that now he will have no more to do with us, nor admit of any further Treaties of Peace with those who have so often mocked him.

3. As hath been said, the frequent Experiments which we have had of our Fickleness, Falseness and Instability, will make us fear it will be always so with us; we shall never attain to more Strength, but be still as unstable as formerly.

These Difficulties and Discouragements are so great, that it is a very hard Matter to say any thing to remove them;

them ; by which we still farther see the bad Consequents of Backsliding, and the woful Entanglements it brings the Soul into, which should caution us to beware of this Sin.

As to the Objection, there's nothing more sure than that there is some Defect in your Resolutions and Endeavours to recover ; else it could not be, but that God would graciously come in to you and assist you, and you should not still have Cause to complain as you do, that your Backslidings are renewed, and you still stick fast in the Mire where you were. God is so ready to help and promote all sincere and hearty Endeavours to return, that we may certainly conclude the Fault to be our own, if our Endeavours be not in some Measure successful.

Now if you ask what is to be done by one, who lies under this Discouragement, arising from his Experience of the Weakness and Instability of his Heart, and his perpetual Returns to a sinful Course, after Resolutions and Promises to the contrary ; I answer,

1. Get strong and firm Resolutions to forsake your sinful Courses. Your former Resolutions have been weak and im-

imperfect; they have been but half Resolutions, and this hath betrayed you to any Temptation that you next met with. You were, when most resolved to take up a new Course of Life, but *as a Cake not turned, a Cake half baked*, as God complains of *Ephraim*, *Hos.* 7. 8. Had your Resolutions been full and firm, you might have found them more stable and permanent. You must not think every slight and overly Resolution will fortify you against Temptations, and enable you to withstand the Assaults of them. Those Resolutions are likely to stand you in some stead, that have been advisedly taken up upon serious and deep Consideration of the extream Danger of your present Condition, and of the much sadder Consequents of your Perseverance therein; on a sound and mature weighing of the important Moment of your speedy returning to God, and how much you are concerned therein. Such Considerations as these, if you dwell on them, and thoroughly digest them, will produce such strong, thorough and abiding Resolutions, as will enable you to stand against any Temptation, by which you may be assaulted,

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2. These your Resolutions must be taken up in God's Strength; and herein also it is possible you failed. You thought, it may be, that your own Resolutions would sufficiently arm and fortifie you against the fiercest Batteries of your spiritual Enemy: But you should have taken God in to your Resolutions, for *our Help standeth in the Name of the Lord who made Heaven and Earth*, Psal. 124. 8. And *without me ye can do nothing*, saith our Saviour, *John 15. 5.*

3. These your Resolutions must be often renewed and frequently minded. We are apt to forget them; and if we have some Remembrance of them, yet unless they be often renewed, and as it were wound up, and that upon a fresh and serious Consideration of the same weighty Grounds on which we took them up; they lose their Strength, and come to be of very little Use and Advantage to us.

4. There must hereunto be added a diligent Use of all other Means that may conduce to the Recovery of what we have lost by our Backsliding. Such as are, keeping our Hearts with all Diligence, frequent communing with them, a careful avoiding of Temptations, and
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the like. 'Tis to small Purpose to resolve, if we be slack and careless otherwise. Let the intemperate Man resolve a thousand times against his Excesses, yet if he shall run upon Temptations, and venture to set his Foot upon Satan's Gins, he cannot think it strange if he be again entangled in the Sin which he resolved to forsake. And the same may be said of the Neglect of any other Means.

Object. 4. But I am so entangled in Sin that I can never get out of those Mazes and Perplexities into which I have by my Sins brought my self. Never any Sinner so intangled was set at Liberty, or obtained Pardon.

To this I answer,

1. You speak too peremptorily and rashly in a Matter which you have not sufficiently consider'd. Do you know all the particular Cases of all pardoned Sinners? of all that lived from the Beginning of the World to this Day? Or of all the Persons in this Congregation that have obtained the Pardon of their Sins?

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2. 'Tis the Nature of all Men under great Troubles and sore Afflictions to judge their own Condition to be most sad and deplorable, as if none in all the World were so miserable as themselves, no Sorrows like to theirs: A very great, and in Respect of the Consequents thereof, a very dangerous Mistake, as might easily be demonstrated if it were convenient here to enlarge on that Subject. 'Tis Satan's Interest to promote this groundless Conceit; for it makes much for his Advantage several Ways. Hereby he discourageth us, and beats us off from the Use of Means to relieve our selves; he fills the Soul with Despair, and makes the Soul run on desperately in a continued Course of Sin: He that thinks he can be no better, cares not how much worse he be than at present he is.

3. If a Man's Intanglements were really such as he apprehends them to be, if they were such as no Person was ever intangled with in all Respects, yet that doth not prove his Case to be forlorn and past all Hope. Is his Case such as that he is without the Comps of all the Promises? Is there any thing in the Word of God whereby it is declared,
that

that such Persons cannot be saved? If there be not, why do you give Way to and indulge your own vain and foolish Fancies, without Warrant from the Word?

4. There is no such sinful Intanglement, no Case so perplexed and intricate, out of which God cannot deliver us. *His Wisdom is infinite*, Psal. 147. 5. When we are at a Loss, *he knows how to deliver*, 2 Pet. 2. 9. And his Power is proportionable to his Wisdom: *He can do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*, Eph. 3. 20. Satan may have miserably entangled you, and he also, as well as you, may think he hath you fast enough in his Net; but if Christ be pleased to undertake your Rescue, he is infinitely wiser and stronger than Satan; and he came into the World on purpose *to destroy the Works of the Devil*, 1 John 3. 8. You are taken in his Net, and the more you struggle to get out of it, the faster you seem to be intangled: But 'tis much more easie for Christ to break the Net, and set you at Liberty, than 'tis for you to break the Spider's Web, and set the Poor intangled Fly at Liberty.

5. If you be soundly humbled for your Sins, and if you unfeignedly seek unto him for pardoning Mercy, he will effectually relieve you, how forlorn and desperate soever your Case may seem to be: 'Tis impossible that he should fail to do it for you, considering his Promise and Engagement; for otherwise he should be worse than his Word. To be false, fickle and inconstant, is for weak and sinful Man: But *God is not as Man that he should lie, neither the Son of Man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it; or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* Num. 23. 19.

Object. 5. If I had returned unto God sooner, I might have been received; but I have lost my Season, I did not know the Day of my Visitation; and now the things belonging to my Peace are hid from mine Eyes, and will for ever be so, as I think, I have just Cause to fear: The Day of Grace to me is over, and that's my Misery.

Ans. 1. That is a rash and groundless Affirmation. Your Day of Grace is past and run out say you; but who told you so? To be sure your own
N n dark,

dark, unbelieving and deceived Heart, or Satan: God never told you so, nor did he ever tell any Man else so, who bewails the Loss of former Opportunities, and the Rejection of Grace formerly afforded; and unfeignedly desires at last to return to God if there might be any Hopes of finding Mercy with him. What Scripture have you to evidence, that the Day of Grace is over to any such Person? You can produce no Scripture for it: 'Tis a meer Delusion.

2. Are you not still alive and on this side Hell? Do you not still live under the Dispensation of the Word? Are you not within the Sound of the Gospel? Do you not from time to time hear it calling Sinners to Repentance, and promising Mercy to the Penitent? And is there in these Invitations and Calls any Word of Exception whereby you in particular are excluded? And why then should you exclude your self? God, by the Publication of the Gospel, proclaims Pardon to all Sinners that shall return and come in to him, without Exception; he saith, *All that come unto him shall be welcome*: and you say no, you shall not be entertained though you do come. What is this but in plain

Terms

Terms to contradict and oppose him? He says one thing, and you another.

3. No Man ought to say, nor warrantably can say, that his Day of Grace is over while he is alive, and while God calls him to Repentance, and he is freely willing to return to him if he thought he might be accepted. 'Tis a most certain Truth, that how long soever any Man hath refused Mercy, yet if he at last unfeignedly return to God, he shall not be rejected: *Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out,* saith our Saviour, *John 6. 37.* And so long as coming unto Christ a Sinner may be sure to be entertained, 'tis impossible that his Day of Grace should be over. There is no such Time when any truly humbled and penitent Sinner shall be refused or thrust off; and therefore no such Time when the Day of Grace is over to such a Person. 'Tis true there may be such a Time when a Sinner is given up to his own Impenitency and Unbelief, and no more Mercy shall be offer'd him; but that is not your Case if you be at last truly willing to return to God. Yea though a Man for the present should find his Heart to be extreemly hardened and ut-

terly averse from returning to God, yet can he not thence certainly conclude, that the Day of Grace is over; because he knows not but that the time may be yet coming when God will soften his Heart and give him Grace to repent, and accept the Mercy which is tender'd him in the Gospel upon the Terms on which the Gospel tenders it: Unless he know himself to have committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Object. 6. That's my Case; I have committed that Sin, and so there is no Hope of Mercy for me.

Ans. 1. This is Satan's usual Suggestion, that he may thereby take Sinners off from the Use of Means for making their Peace with God, and drive them to despair; you may therefore justly suspect him here.

2. Many others before you have had such Thoughts, and been strongly possess'd with them; none could persuade them to the contrary; and yet they have been well freed from this Delusion, and settled at last.

3. Do you know what that Sin is, that you should so absolutely pronounce
your

your self guilty of it? 'Tis no easie Matter to determine wherein that Sin consists; the most learned and judicious Divines are not all agreed upon that Point: And yet it seems, you know that Sin so well, that you are sure you have committed it. But the Truth is, the Devil abuseth Mens Ignorance, and perswades many to believe any thing almost to be that unpardonable Sin; for if he can so far deceive them as to make them apprehend themselves to have contracted the Guilt of that Sin, then he knows they are in their own Thoughts shut up under an Impossibility of making their Peace with God by Repentance. Till that Delusion be removed, he knows, no Means can work upon them to do them any Good; and 'tis very hard to remove it, unless a Man could know what that particular Sin is which Satan represents to the Soul as the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

I shall here only instance in some of those Sins which the Enemy of Souls usually affrights Men with, as if being guilty of those Sins, they lay under the fearful Guilt of the Sin against the Holy Ghost.

N n 3

1. Some

1. Some have concluded themselves to be guilty of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, because they have sinned against such clear Light, against so much Knowledge and such strong Convictions.

But (1.) If this should be the unpardonable Sin, who, under the Light of the Gospel, could be free from that Guilt? Where is the Man amongst us all to be found who hath not often so sinned?

(2.) Have we not an undeniable Instance of one who so sinned, and yet was free from that unpardonable Sin? What think you of *St. Peter*, who, against his Knowledge, and against the Dictates and Gain-sayings of his Conscience, denied his Master, and that with such Circumstances as fearfully aggravated his Sin? *Matth. 26. 70, 71, 72, 73, 74.* And yet he repented of his Sin, and Christ afterwards owned him and comforted him, *Mark 16. 7. John 21. 15, 16, 17.*

2. Others have been apt to think any very great and heinous Sin to be that Sin.

But (1.) Doth not God call the greatest Sinners to Repentance, and promise Mercy to them upon their Repentance?

tance? *Wash ye, make ye clean, (saith he) put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do Evil, learn to do well, seek Judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool, Isai. 16. 17, 18.*

(2.) Have we not Instances of great Sinners that have, upon their Repentance, obtained Mercy? *Manasseh* was a most grievous Sinner, and yet even he repenting obtained Pardon, *2 Chron. 33.* *St. Paul, who had been a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, an injurious Person, the chief of Sinners, as he himself acknowledgeth, upon his Repentance obtained Mercy, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 16.*

3. Others have apprehended themselves to be guilty of that Sin in Regard of their horrid and blasphemous Thoughts of God and Christ.

But (1.) These blasphemous Thoughts are often from Satan, who first injects them, and then terrifieth Men with them.

(2.) Our Saviour hath assured us, *That all Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall*

shall be forgiven unto Men, Matth. 12. 31. And Blasphemy not only in Thought, but in Word also, hath been forgiven, as we read in *St. Paul's Case, 1 Tim. 1. 13, 15.* the Place before mentioned. Now what hath been forgiven cannot be the unpardonable Sin.

4. Others have fancied themselves to be involved in the Guilt of the Sin against the holy Ghost in regard of their notorious and wretched Apostacy; because they had fallen off from their Profession, and declined from those good Ways which formerly they approved of and delighted in.

But whatever be that unpardonable Sin, any Apostacy may not be judged to be that Sin. For Apostates and Backsliders are called upon and invited to return unto God, and Mercy is promised them if they so do. *Return thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine Anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and will not keep Anger for ever, Jer. 3. 12.* So again, *Hos. 14. 1, 2, 3, 4.* O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine Iniquity. Take with thee Words and turn unto the Lord; say unto him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive

ceive us graciously: So will we render the Calves of our Lips. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon Horses, neither will we say any more to the Work of our Hands, ye are our Gods: For in thee the Fatherless findeth Mercy. Upon this their unfeigned Repentance and Return to God, he saith of them, I will heal their Backslidings, I will love them freely; for mine Anger is turned away from them.

5. Others may be apt to fear, that they have contracted the fearful Guilt of that Sin, because they have not only sinned against the Father and the Son, but against the Holy Ghost in particular; they have quenched the Holy Spirit, they have sinned against the Illuminations and Motions of the Spirit, yea, they have sometimes question'd the Deity of the Holy Ghost; and is not this (say they) the Sin against the Holy Ghost?

Ans. There may be many Sins against the Holy Ghost which are not *The Sin against the Holy Ghost*, the greatest and unpardonable Sin.

For (1.) Every Sin that a Man commits is against the Holy Ghost, as well as against the Father and the Son, every Sin

Sin being against the whole Trinity.

(2.) Many Sins are in a special Manner against the Holy Ghost as being against his Illuminations, his Teachings, his Convictions, his Leadings and his Consolations. If these were the unpardonable Sin, no Christian could be saved: Where is the Man to be found that hath not often sinned against these? In a Word, are your Sins against the Holy Ghost such as you desire to be humbled for, such as you strive against, pray against, resolve against, judge your self for as often as you fall into them, and earnestly seek unto God for the Pardon of them; Then may you assure your self that they are not the great and unpardonable Sin against the Holy Ghost.

Thus I have endeavour'd to remove whatever might hinder and discourage Backsliders and Apostates from returning unto God. And now what have you Backsliders and Apostates to say why you should not return? There can be nothing to hinder you but that you have no Mind to return. 'Tis to be feared that you love your Sins too well, and are unwilling to forsake them. If this be your Temper, then it seems I have

have lost my Labour as to you: You are resolved to go on in your Sins, and to backslide more and more notwithstanding all that can be said to encourage you to return. I have only two things to lay before these Persons to be seriously ponder'd and consider'd by them.

1. I desire them to consider how highly God is provoked by their slighting and rejecting the Mercy that is offered them. His high Displeasure against such is sufficiently declared in that one Scripture, *Rev. 22. 11, 12.* where God in Way of highest Indignation against them saith, *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still, &c. And behold I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man as his Work shall be.* Which is as much as if God had said, I perceive you are resolved to persevere in your sinful Courses; you will not be reformed by any thing that can be spoken to reclaim you: Well then, if it be so, take your Course, go on wallowing in your Sins till I come and reckon with you once for all, and it shall not be long before I come.

2. I desire

2. I desire them to consider, that Mercy hath been once more offered them, they have this Day been invited and importuned to return to God; and that all Discouragements and stumbling Blocks that lay before them to hinder them from returning, have been removed and taken out of the Way; And that this will be no small Aggravation of their Sin and Punishment, if they shall still refuse to return. Their Mouths will be stopped, and they will have nothing to say for themselves whereby their refusing to return to God may be excused. They will not be able to plead, that they thought they should not be accepted; or that the Day of Grace had been over; or that they were unhappily involved in the Guilt of the unpardonable Sin. No, it will undeniably appear that all these and all other Obstacles were removed, and yet they would not return. This being their Case, what can they expect but to be most severely punished, and *destroyed with double Destruction*? as the Prophet speaks, *Jer. 17. 18. And that God should laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh; when their Fear cometh as Desolation, and their Destruction as a Whirlwind; when*

when Distress and Anguish cometh upon them? as he threatneth obstinate and incorrigible Sinners, *Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26, 27.*

Use 3. What a Mercy then is it to be recovered from Apostacy or Backsliding! It is an Effect of most free Grace and unspeakable Love, *Hos. 14. 4.* For if there be any sort of Sinners that give God just Cause of forsaking them and casting them off for ever, then certainly Apostates and Backsliders do, who sin against so much Love, and so wretchedly abuse it to the Encouraging of themselves in Sin so much the more. And as it is a Mercy, a singular and invaluable Mercy to be recovered from Apostacy, and to have *our Backslidings healed*; so it is to be recover'd any Way, even by the most severe and most unwelcome Means and Methods of Cure which our heavenly Physician shall at any time think fit to apply and make Use of; to be sharply chasten'd and whipp'd into the right Way; to be sent again to God from whom we have revolted, by weeping Cross, as we say. We have no Reason to think our selves hardly dealt with, whatever we undergo

go or suffer in order to our Recovery, but to account it rich Mercy, unparalleled, transcendent Mercy to be recovered any Way, upon any Terms, whatsoever it cost us.

Now, that all recovered Backsliders and Apostates may be the more thankful unto God for their Recovery, let them consider,

1. How many fall off from God, and never return to him; how many Backsliders and Apostates God never vouchsafeth so to look after, as to make Use of any effectual Means for recovering them and setting them right again.

2. Consider how little you have deserved at the Hands of God more than they, that God should look after you and reclaim you, while he suffers them still to backslide more and more, and at length, through their obstinate Perseverance in their Ways of Sin, to perish eternally in their Backslidings; while he permits them *to draw back to Perdition*, as the Apostle speaks, *Heb. 10. 39.*

But here let me cast in a Caution to such; Let them not abuse this God's admirable Kindness and Free-love, let them not try Experiments with him a second time: If they should relapse and
fall

fall away again, they may either never return, or find it much more difficult; if God should be once more intreated by them, yet they must not expect to find him so easie to be entreated. Let no recovered Backslider that loves his own Peace, run so desperate an Hazard as to venture himself into the Ways of Sin a second time. Hath he not tasted Bitterness enough in those Ways already? Hath he not sufficiently smarted for them? Doth he not yet know by Experience what it is to turn his back upon God, and *forsake the Fountain of living Waters, to hew to himself broken Cisterns that can hold no Water?*

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